



Portrait of Ficino, Landino, Poliziano, and Chalcondyles (Chalcondyles at extreme right) from a fresco of Ghirlandaio in Santa Maria Novella, Florence. (See esp. pp. 222-23 for Chalcondyles' aid to Ficino in translating Plato.)

Interaction  
of the  
“Sibling” Byzantine and Western Cultures  
in the  
Middle Ages and Italian Renaissance  
(330-1600)

Deno John Geanakoplos



We chant it [the *Gloria in excelsis Deo*] in Greek, according to ancient custom of the Roman church to which both Greeks and Latins once adhered. A very large part of Italy was inhabited by Greeks; hence the Greek language was not less known even to the Latins than Latin. Also, the interpreters of the *Septuagint* translated each testament from Hebrew into Greek and it was then put into Latin. . . . It is accordingly proper that Greek precede Latin as a mother her daughter, and that Latin follow Greek as a daughter her mother.

—Anonymous of Tours (Western medieval liturgist), in *Speculum Ecclesiae* 3.2.

When I look here upon the buildings . . . and the beauties of nature and of art I admire this city of Rome because of her former excellence and power. But I find the greatest joy in that, everywhere, I see the greatest similarity with our home city [Constantinople]. Even the similarity which we perceive between two different persons gives us pleasure, most of all when we see how a son resembles his father, or a daughter her mother or brothers, especially when some kinship binds us to him

The beauty of the mother [Rome] emphasizes the beauty of the daughter [Constantinople]. It is not as if we were to compare something alien to something else. Rather we compare one city with itself—the New with the Old Rome. . . . What has nature or art wrought in Rome that one cannot find in our city? Even the survivals resemble one another. If in certain respects this city [Rome] seems to surpass us, so we have other things we can show to compensate. There was and is much in our city [Constantinople] that has no counterpart in Rome, and still more has been brought to genuine perfection by us.

—The Byzantine humanist Manuel Chrysoloras, in “A Comparison of Old and New Rome” (1411).

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## Preface

This volume attempts, through a series of closely related chapters, to provide an understanding of the interaction between the cultures of two major Christian societies, the Byzantine and the Western, in the Middle Ages and the Italian Renaissance. Attention is directed to some aspects or facets of theology, political ideology, religious piety and mysticism, philosophy, and literature, as well as law, music, art, and refinements of living. In order to provide an organic unity for the chapters, the author, combining probably for the first time in this connection sociological and historical techniques, has sought in the Prologue to outline the centuries-long process of interaction, in particular of acculturation, between the two societies, and finally, in the Epilogue, to summarize the effects of this process. By means of this interdisciplinary approach, historical phases of periodization and a "typology" of acculturation are suggested as aids to interpreting the complex cultural phenomena discussed.

At the center of the discussion of relations between East and West are the Byzantine and Roman Catholic churches. With these churches today drawing ever closer together, it is hoped that this book, while identifying the forces of disunity, will help also to illuminate those more underlying factors which, from Christian antiquity onward, made for rapprochement between the churches as well as their cultures.

A word about the individual chapters and their genesis. Insofar as possible they have been chronologically arranged. The terms "Middle Ages" and "Renaissance" are used for the sake of convenience and do not imply a break in historical continuity (as they should not, I believe, in the relations of the two cultures discussed here). In part 1, "Byzantium, the Church, and the Medieval Latin World," the first chapter attempts to define what may well be, in the last analysis, the most creative, formative element in the Byzantine cultural synthesis, Orthodox Christianity, the ethos of which differs markedly from Western Christianity. The chapter, in another form, was originally read in 1970 in New York, preceding the induction ceremony of the archons into the Orthodox Patriarchal



Order of St. Andrew. Chapter 2 evaluates the significance of the close connection between religion and "nationalism" in the Byzantine state, a consideration that was frequently to complicate relations between Constantinople and the papacy, especially regarding religious union. This material was originally presented at an Eastern Orthodox-Jewish Symposium in New York City in 1972. Chapter 3, an earlier version of which appeared in my book *Byzantine East and Latin West* (Oxford, 1966), now out of print, was included at the urging of colleagues and students. It appears here in considerably revised form, including a new section on the influence of the Byzantine Church Fathers, deletion of some sections, and enrichment of many others, especially those on vocabulary borrowings, the liturgy, and art. The chapter attempts to delineate the surprisingly manifold and pervasive influences exerted by Byzantine culture on Western civilization. Though obviously it can make no claim to comprehensiveness, this chapter, so far as I am aware, is still the only attempt, at least in English, to provide a synoptic treatment of the more important aspects of this vast theme. Chapter 4 is one of the first discussions to be written on the converse question, Western influences on Byzantine civilization, despite the widespread view that virtually all medieval influence flowed from East to West. The original essay, limited to the fields of theology and literature\* (where the influence is probably the most striking), was read in 1967 in Toronto at the annual meeting of the Medieval Academy of America. It has since undergone extensive changes and additions.

Chapters 5 and 6 have previously appeared in journals, the former in *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies* (1966) and the latter in *Church History* (1960). They are printed here, with significant changes in text and notes, because each focuses on a substantive theme in Byzantine-Latin cultural interaction. Chapter 5 examines the influence of imperial Byzantine authority (the so-called Caesaropapism) on imperial church building, through a study of the impressive churches constructed in East and West by the two greatest builder-emperors, Constantine and Justinian. In chapter 6, a paper initially written for the Oxford Patristic Congress of 1965 and subsequently expanded, an effort is made to trace the influence of the theology of Maximos the Confessor, the Byzantine exegete of the mystical

\*I hope soon to publish an entire monograph on the general theme of the impact of Western culture on the Byzantine. See now, however, chapter 7, on German legal influence on Byzantium.



Pseudo-Dionysian writings, on subsequent Latin and Greek theologians.

In chapter 7 an effort is made to explain the origins of the appearance in Byzantine Nicaea of curious legal phenomena—the ordeal by fire and the judicial duel, both normally connected with the Germanic West and not Byzantium, where the principles of Roman law prevailed. Finally, in chapter 8 an analysis is made of a colloquy that occurred between a Greek bishop and a Latin bishop, which supposedly took place after the attempted union of the churches at the Council of Lyons in 1274. Set forth here are many ideas and prejudices, both religious and pseudoscientific, of both the upper class and the common people—ideas that helped to make it so difficult for the two peoples to understand one another.

Part 2 of the book is concerned with cultural relations of East and West during the Italian Renaissance (ca. 1350 to 1600), more particularly before and after 1453 when Byzantium became a Turkish province and was therefore isolated from the Western world. Nevertheless, as shown in Chapter 9, learned Greek émigrés escaping to the West in a remarkable “diaspora,” were able to continue the recently developed pattern of close Byzantine-Latin relations, but now entirely on Latin soil, where they established communities in Venice and Naples as well as in other Western centers. These colonies not only transmitted Greek learning to the Renaissance but, as is rarely realized, with the precipitous cultural decline of mainland Greece (a situation paralleling that of the earlier Western “Dark Ages”), consciously continued to preserve the Greek educational inheritance and thus played a major (but overlooked) role in the genesis of the modern Greek sense of national consciousness. This chapter is a much expanded version of a paper delivered at the Modern Greek Studies Association at Harvard in 1971 on the 150th anniversary of Greek Independence. Chapter 10, originally delivered as a paper at the Renaissance Symposium of the State University of New York at Binghamton in 1968, discusses the role of the Venetian-held island of Crete as a kind of halfway point in the transmission of Greco-Byzantine culture to the West during the Renaissance, a phenomenon only recently beginning to receive adequate recognition.

Chapter 11 focuses on San Bernardino of Siena, the most popular preacher of the Renaissance period, establishing not only his presence at the Council of Florence, that climactic confrontation of



Byzantine and Western churches and intellects, but showing the kind of influence he may well have exerted on the Greeks at the council. Chapter 12 (written for the Balkan Studies Conference held in Athens in 1970 but here enlarged and provided with documentation) offers new information on and clarifies the circumstances surrounding the death of the most learned of Renaissance Hellenists, Marcus Musurus. Chapter 13 discusses the career of one of the most famous of all Byzantine humanist exiles, Demetrius Chalcondyles, who taught at three major Italian humanist centers—Padua, Florence, and Milan—all of which were then at the pinnacle of their fame. The chapter concentrates especially on his tenure at Padua, providing, by means of a largely unpublished manuscript, new information concerning his inaugural address on the occasion of the establishment of the first Greek chair at that university. In order to give the reader a deeper understanding of this key event in the development of Paduan-Venetian humanism, the oration—one of the few by a Byzantine humanist to be preserved—is here presented in English translation. (See the appendix for my edition of the original Latin text.) Chapter 14, marking the final important step in East-West cultural relations, discusses, for the first time in synthesis, the return to the West during the Renaissance of the Greek Fathers of the church in translation or in the original text, concentrating particularly on the first editions to have been published. Part of this paper was read in 1974 at Cambridge University (England) at Professor Bolgar's international conference on "Classical Influences in the Renaissance, 1500–1700."

Finally, in the Epilogue, on the basis of the phases of historical periodization and the particular typology of acculturation proposed in the Prologue, an effort is made, in the light of all the material presented, to summarize and evaluate some of the principal effects of this extraordinary and ever-fluctuating interaction of over a millennium between the "sibling" but often estranged Byzantine and Latin civilizations.

For help given me in preparing for publication various aspects of the material in this book, I should like to express my appreciation to: Professors Evan Vlachos, Demetrius Tsames, Paul Kristeller, Alexander Turyn, Father William Conlan O.P., P. Richard Metcalf, Sydney Ahlstrom, Brevard Childs, H. von Stadten; to Mary Grimes; to my assistants at one time or another at Yale

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University, John Erickson, Darlene Welborn, Lawrence Le Seure, and Chris Bender; and, finally, to my secretary Ruth Kurzbauer and to my manuscript editor at Yale Press, Barbara Folsom.

*New Haven, Conn.*  
1975

D.J.G.



# Chronology of Events

Byzantine and Western, 330–1600

- 312      Constantine's vision and victory at the Milvian Bridge
- 325      First ecumenical council, at Nicaea (over Arianism)
- 330      Foundation of Constantinople: beginning of the  
"Christian" Roman (Byzantine) Empire
- 378      Defeat of Emperor Valens by the Goths at Adrianople
- 381      Second ecumenical council, at Constantinople (reaffirm-  
ing anti-Arianism)
- 395      Official separation of eastern and western halves of the  
Roman Empire
- 431      Third ecumenical council, at Ephesus: Nestorius con-  
demned
- 451      Fourth ecumenical council, at Chalcedon: Mono-  
physites condemned
- 476      End of Roman Empire in the West; German states  
established
- 527–65      Reign of Justinian I: recovery of much of the West
- 529      Justinian Code published; soon afterward promulga-  
tion of the Pandects
- 532      Nika riots; St. Sophia destroyed and later rebuilt by  
Justinian
- 535–40      Byzantines recapture Sicily and Italy from Ostrogoths
- 553      Fifth ecumenical council, at Constantinople: conces-  
sions made to Monophysites
- 568      Lombards invade Italy

- 582–602 Creation of Exarchates of Ravenna and Carthage
- 610–41 Emperor Heraclius: conquest of the Persian Empire
- 636–46 Arabs occupy Palestine, Syria, Egypt
- 668–85 Reorganization of Byzantine Empire: emergence of the *theme* system
- 680 Sixth ecumenical council, at Constantinople: appeasement of Monophysites through Monothelitism condemned
- 717–41 Leo III: second defense of Constantinople against the Arabs
- 726 (or 730) Iconoclast decree of Leo III
- 750 Fall of Umayyad Caliphate. Abbassid Caliphate transferred from Damascus to Bagdad
- 751 Capture of Ravenna by Lombards, ending Byzantine hegemony in north and central Italy
- 754 Iconoclastic council at Hieria
- 787 Seventh ecumenical council: restoration of the icons
- 800 Coronation of Charlemagne: restoration of Roman Empire in the West
- 826 Capture of Crete by the Arabs
- 843 Feast of Orthodoxy and final restoration of the icons
- 863 Cyril and Methodius' mission to Moravia
- 864 Conversion of the Bulgars
- 867 Photius, Patriarch of Constantinople; schism with Rome (Pope Nicholas I)
- 902 Final fall of Sicily to the Arabs
- 961 Recapture of Crete from the Arabs
- 976–1025 Zenith of Byzantine imperial power under Basil II
- 989 Russia accepts Orthodox Christianity: baptism of Vladimir



- 1030 Normans begin conquest of Byzantine southern Italy
- 1054 Schism between Constantinople and Rome (Cerularius and Humbert)
- 1056 on "Time of Troubles": Byzantine economic, political, and social crisis
- 1071 Double Byzantine defeat: at Manzikert by the Turks and at Bari by the Normans
- 1081 Accession of Alexius I Comnenus, "Savior" of Byzantium
- 1082 Byzantine alliance with Venice and grant of trading concessions to Venetians
- 1096 First Crusade from the West passes through Constantinople
- 1143-80 Reign of latinophile Manuel I Comnenus; struggle with Hohenstaufen
- 1147 Second Crusade from West, to recover Edessa
- 1182 Massacre of Latins in Constantinople
- 1185 Thessalonica seized and sacked by the Normans
- 1187 Third Crusade, after Jerusalem's fall to Saladin
- 1204 Fourth Crusade: Latin capture and sack of Constantinople and establishment of the Latin Empire (to 1261); acquisition of Crete by Venice
- 1204-61 Greek "Empire" of Nicaea in Asia Minor
- 1215 Fourth Lateran Council under Innocent III
- 1259 Byzantium defeats Latin army at Pelagonia; capture of Mistra from the Latins
- 1261 Michael VIII Palaeologus captures Constantinople; Byzantine Empire restored
- 1266 Charles of Anjou defeats Manfred and becomes king of Sicily
- 1281 Michael VIII excommunicated by Pope Martin IV and a crusade proclaimed against Byzantium

- 1282 "Sicilian Vespers": effective end of Latin attempts to recapture Constantinople
- 1305 "Babylonian Captivity" of the papacy at Avignon (to 1377)
- 1341-91 John V Palaeologus rules Byzantium
- 1341 Synod on Palamism, at Constantinople
- 1351 Synod at Constantinople approves Palamism
- 1361 Pilatus appointed, in Florence, to first chair of Greek in western Europe
- 1369 Emperor John V personally accepts Catholicism in Rome
- 1378 Great Schism begins in Roman church (until 1417)
- 1391-1425 Reign of Emperor Manuel II Palaeologus in Byzantium
- 1396 Chrysoloras is appointed to Greek chair in Florence, inaugurating first systematic, Western study of Greek since antiquity.
- 1399 Manuel II Palaeologus comes to the West (until 1402), seeking military aid against the Turks
- 1402 Death of Giangaleazzo Visconti of Milan, thereby ending Florentine fear of invasion; Battle of Angora: defeat of the Ottoman Turks by Timur
- 1409 Council of Pisa: Alexander V (Petrus Philarges) elected pope
- 1414 Council of Constance (to 1418)
- 1417 End of Great Schism: election of Pope Martin V
- 1422 Turks besiege Constantinople
- 1430 Turks conquer Thessalonica from Venice
- 1431 Council of Basle convened (to 1449)
- 1434 Cosimo de' Medici assumes power in Florence
- 1435 Establishment of Greek colony in Naples.



# CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS

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- 1438-39 Convocation of unionist Council of Florence between Greek and Latin churches
- 1444 Battle of Varna
- 1447-55 Pontificate of Nicholas V
- 1452 Union of Greek and Latin churches proclaimed at Constantinople
- 1453 Constantinople captured by the Ottoman Turks
- 1460 Mistra falls to the Turks
- 1462 Establishment of Platonic Academy in Florence
- 1463 Establishment by Venice of first Greek chair at the University of Padua (for Chalcondyles)
- 1467 Bessarion bequeaths his Greek library to Venice
- 1469 Lorenzo the Magnificent in power in Florence (to 1492)
- 1470 Fall of Venetian-held Negropont to the Turks
- 1476 Grammar of Constantine Lascaris is published in Milan, first Greek book printed in Europe
- 1494 Invasion of Italy by the French king, Charles VIII
- 1494-95 Aldus Manutius founds his Neakademia in Venice
- 1503 Musurus appointed professor of Greek at Padua University
- 1508 Cardinal Ximenes founds the University of Alcalá (Spain); Aldine press prints edition of Erasmus's *Adages*
- 1513-21 Pontificate of Leo X
- 1513 Aldine publication of Musurus' *editio princeps* of the complete works of Plato
- 1522 Rhodes falls to the Turks
- 1527 Sack of Rome
- 1536 Death of Erasmus

- 1539      Erection of Greek Church of San Giorgio in Venice
- 1561      Franciscus Portus settles in Geneva
- 1568      Pius V declares Basil, Gregory of Nazianzus, Chrysostom, and Athanasius "Doctors of the Church"
- 1571      Turks conquer Cyprus; Battle of Lepanto
- 1577      Greek college of St. Athanasius founded in Rome
- 1596      Council of Brest
- 1602      Death of Margounios in Venice
- 1669      Turks capture Venetian-held island of Crete



## Prologue: The Process of Acculturation

In recent years much has been written on Byzantium and even more on the medieval West—two cultures whose histories revert back to a common origin in the Greco-Latin world of the one Christian, Roman Empire. Despite the often absorbing, in time even dramatically hostile, nature of their relations, there is yet no comprehensive study of the interaction of the two cultures, in particular of what may be called the “acculturation” of each society toward the other during the centuries-long continuum comprising the Middle Ages and the Renaissance (330–1600). What is needed for such an investigation is, first, a delineation, at least in broad outline, of the patterns of their social interaction—patterns which may then be examined for evidence of cultural influences.

Of particular import for such a study is an analysis of the developing attitudes of the two kindred civilizations as manifested in the gradual transformation of their societies from amicable rivalry to overt hostility. Such attitudes will in turn provide the key to the degree of intercultural receptivity or repulsion which developed in the various strata of society—attitudes basic for any genuine understanding of the dynamics of cross-cultural exchange.

The acculturative process consists of three basic steps: initial encounter between cultures, interaction, and finally, the resultant rejection, “fragmentation,” or assimilation of certain cultural elements on the part of one or both societies.<sup>1</sup> In trying to establish criteria—or as sociologists and anthropologists would say, a “typology”—for the analysis of cultural influences between the Byzantine and Latin peoples, the following modes of acculturation may be suggested: (1) the cultural dominance of one society over the other with assimilation of cultural elements by the less developed civilization from the more advanced;\* (2) the amalgamation of elements of the two cultures into a new kind of synthesis; (3) the confrontation of two advanced but antagonistic societies, each challenging the dominance of the other’s cultural tradition. Sometimes present

\*Of course, the reverse process, though far less common, is also possible. See, for example, chap. 4, pp. 95–117.



in one or even all three modes of acculturation is the phenomenon of alienation of a particular group of society from the dominant cultural trends or processes being experienced by that society, with the consequent eruption of what sociologists term "nativistic reactions" and/or "revitalization movements." "Nativistic reaction" is characterized by an overpowering desire to hold firm and to reassert, in the face of threatening external or internal pressures, the traditional forms and beliefs of the culture. "Revitalization movement," a more comprehensive term, refers to a desire not only to revivify the traditional roots of the culture but also to strengthen them through a deeper, more creative appreciation, particularly of their historical origins.<sup>2</sup>

Such modes of acculturation as these are, of course, well known to the social scientist. But attention has hitherto primarily been directed to noncomplex cases of cross-cultural relations, particularly the influence of a technologically advanced society (the American or Western European, for example) on a far less developed one (say, the American Indian or central African). The history of Byzantine-Latin cultural relations, in contrast, is unique. Not only were the two cultures, originally closely related; in the main characterized by a high level of development, but between them existed a virtually unbroken continuity of connections over a vast period of time. Moreover, during the last three or four centuries of interaction, they had, on many levels, reached a condition of cultural parity.

Finally, in the pattern formed by their interrelations may be observed the full range of the various modes of acculturation mentioned above, together with instances of the phenomena of "nativistic" and "revitalization" movements. It should be observed that since little or no sociological analysis has hitherto been devoted to the encounter of two advanced cultures, there are few guidelines to follow. Hence, the modes of acculturation proposed here, and especially the categorization of mental attitudes underlying the behavior of the two peoples (a basic emphasis throughout this book),<sup>3</sup> may not always be consistent with established acculturation models, which have thus far been based primarily on examinations of relations between advanced and less developed societies.

What is unique, to begin with, about the interaction of the Byzantine and Latin cultures, is that they were originally "siblings," that is, they evolved from the same matrix, the Christianized Roman



Empire and its classical civilization. This fact indicates that, despite a mutual rivalry which over the centuries developed into an overwhelming hostility, there always lurked in the background the feeling that, somehow, both societies belonged together as parts of a united Christendom.<sup>4</sup> The configuration of cultures, however, was early on altered by two new elements: the intrusion of the barbarian Germans into the West on a scale greater than ever before, and the continual, if sporadic, influences seeping into Byzantium from the ancient, non-Roman or Asiatic East. More important in molding their cultural development was what may be considered the most creative force in the development of Byzantine and, perhaps to a lesser extent, of Western civilization—their respective forms of Christianity, each strikingly different, especially in ethos, from its counterpart.<sup>5</sup>

For one culture to influence another to any marked degree there must usually exist more than sporadic connections between a few individuals. That is, "contact situations" must obtain for more than brief periods and involve relatively influential groups in society.<sup>6</sup> Which is not to deny that charismatic individuals, themselves or through their works (if the time is "ripe"), can bring about certain alterations in the pattern of intercultural relations. Witness, in the twelfth century, the influence of the Byzantine John of Damascus on Western theology; in the fourteenth, the fascination with Thomas Aquinas on the part of some Byzantine scholars; or, still later in the Italian Renaissance, the impact of the teaching of the Byzantine Manuel Chrysoloras who, almost single-handedly, launched in the West a revival of Greek learning.<sup>7</sup>

A precondition to establishment of an intercultural pattern of Latin-Byzantine relations must, then, be the delineation, at least in broad contours, of the main "contact situations" of the two peoples all the way from the fourth through the sixteenth century.<sup>8</sup> This pattern may, for the sake of convenience, be broadly divided into four chronological phases or periods.

The first extends from the fourth to the late eleventh century, during which time Byzantine culture far surpassed that of the West and relations between the two were sporadic; the second, from the First Crusade in 1095 to the Greek recovery of Constantinople from the Latins in 1261, during which period large groups of people from the two civilizations confronted each other in the East, for the first time *en masse*; the third, from 1261 to the fall of Constantinople



in 1453, when, again on Greek soil, the interaction between the increasingly dynamic Western and the highly developed but more static Eastern culture took on a more and more antagonistic form; and the fourth and final period, that of the Greek "diaspora," extending from approximately a half century before 1453 to the end of the Renaissance.

During this last period the previous situation was reversed, with Latin culture in certain respects surpassing the Greek (for example, in technology, social organization, and some aspects of theological speculation). Contacts now occurred primarily in the West, to which many Greek refugees fled to escape the Turkish occupation. It should be observed that the period after 1453 is, technically speaking, post-Byzantine. But, as will be shown, in the latter part of the fifteenth and in the sixteenth century Byzantine influences continued, in some cases even more strongly than before, to influence foreign areas, especially Renaissance Italy (and the world of the Orthodox Slavs).

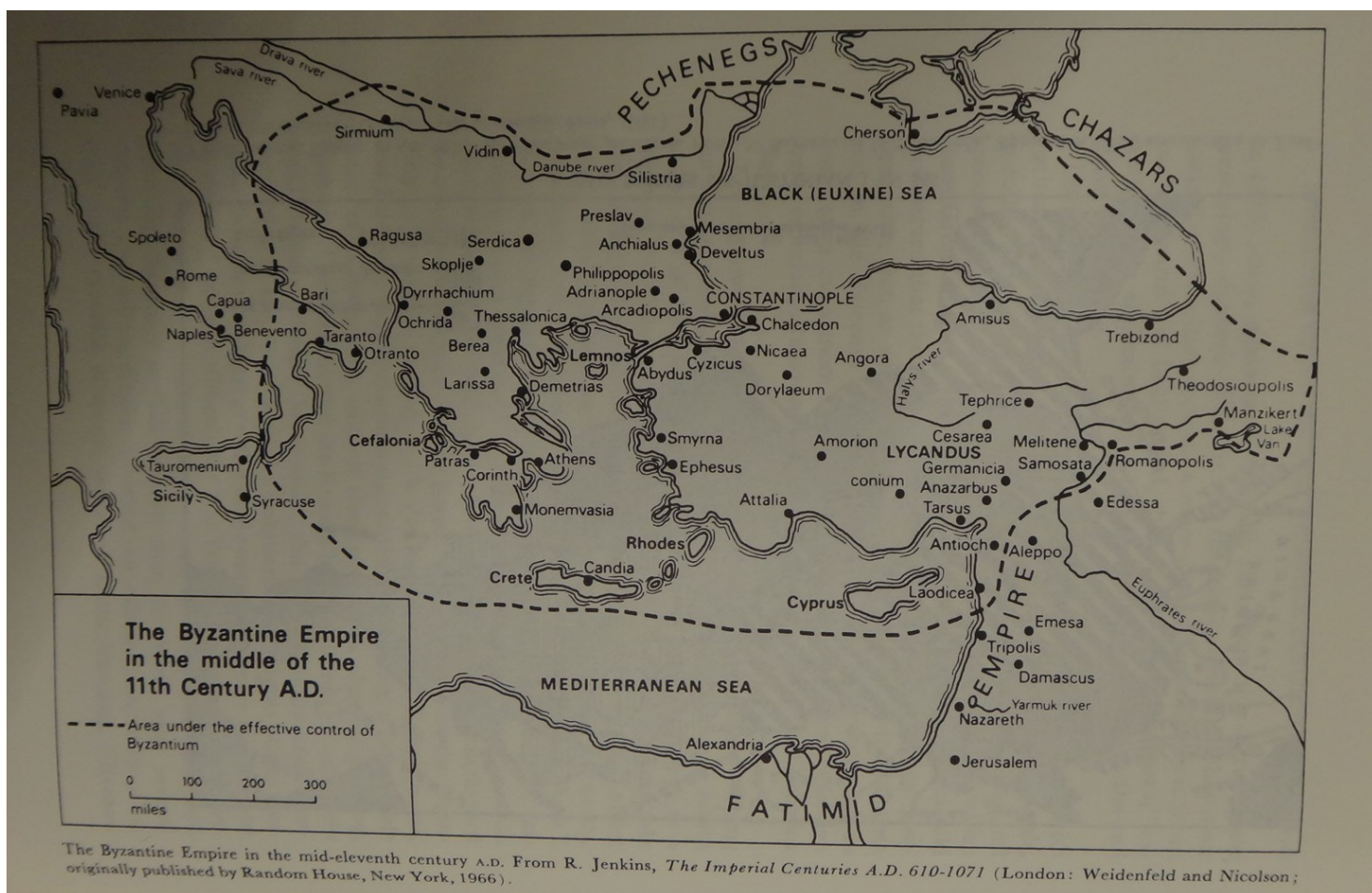
Let us now outline the pattern of "contact situations" during our four chronological periods. In the first phase, from the fourth to the end of the eleventh century, Western society, largely as a result of the Germanic invasions (followed by those of the Arabs and Vikings) was almost completely disrupted, bringing about severe social and economic dislocation. Thus the West, culturally, sank more and more deeply into the mire of the "Dark Ages." Though the Byzantine Empire after Justinian's reign (d. 565) underwent its own lesser Dark Ages, it managed, in contrast, to remain relatively stable—in any case far more intellectually enlightened than the West. It was in this first period (and especially by the beginning of the eighth century, with the loss of Semitic Egypt, Syria, and Palestine) that Byzantium succeeded in achieving a remarkable fusion of its three basic cultural elements (Greek classical learning, Orthodox Christianity, and the Roman legal tradition) into a closely knit, viable synthesis.<sup>9</sup> Meanwhile, the near anarchy and disorganization of the West, with the semibarbaric customs of the Germans (witness their legal practice of the ordeal by fire, to be discussed in detail)<sup>10</sup> made it difficult for the West to achieve a viable integration of its own cultural components. It was not, in fact, until probably the early twelfth century that the West, after several cultural regressions, finally achieved an effective synthesis of its own main cultural elements—classical Latin learning, "Roman





### 1. THE EMPIRE OF JUSTINIAN I IN 565

The Byzantine Empire in A.D. 565 under Emperor Justinian. From N. Baynes and H. Moss, eds., *Byzantium: An Introduction to East Roman Civilization* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1961).



The Byzantine Empire in the mid-eleventh century A.D. From R. Jenkins, *The Imperial Centuries A.D. 610-1071* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson; originally published by Random House, New York, 1966).





Catholic" Christianity, and, above all, the formerly disruptive but now more sophisticated Germanic influences.<sup>11</sup> Then for the first time the West, now reflecting the vigor of a newly mature culture, was able to break free of its confines and even to expand into the neighboring Byzantine (and Arabic) lands. It is probably no coincidence that the great Western movement of the Crusades occurred at more or less the same time as the West's growth into cultural maturity.

During this same first phase, though opportunities for contact between Greeks and Latins on a large scale were infrequent, individuals did sometimes move from one area to the other: ambassadors of popes and emperors, merchants eager for profit, adventurers seeking lands or loot, or, on rare occasions, a scholar or two curious to learn something of the past or present of the opposite half of Christendom. Nevertheless, considering the fact that Byzantine culture was, in almost all respects, far more developed and sophisticated than the Western, it may readily be conceded that whatever cultural influences existed in this period flowed from East to West, though, to be sure, there were several rather surprising exceptions (to be discussed in appropriate chapters).<sup>12</sup>

Two events of considerable importance for cultural interaction must be singled out in this initial period. First is the religious schism of 1054 which, according to long-standing tradition, has been taken to mark the definitive rupture, ecclesiastically speaking, between East and West. Actually, this rivalry between the two churches had seen its beginnings as early as the fourth century in the opposing claims of the patriarchs of Rome and Constantinople, in growing theological differences—note especially the diversity of Augustine's theological approach from that of the Greek Cappadocian Fathers<sup>13</sup>—and, no less, in cultural differences, as expressed particularly in the language and ritual of the respective liturgies. But this widening gap, exacerbated by political and social factors, reached its climax in 1054 when legates of the pope excommunicated the Greek patriarch Michael Cerularius and were themselves in turn excommunicated by a synod convoked in Constantinople by the patriarch. Nonetheless, however significant this event may seem in retrospect, the cultural and ecclesiastical relations between East and West were not, as we shall later observe, irretrievably damaged. Not only had previous religious ruptures between Rome and Constantinople been successfully healed, but to the general public of East and West,



the collision of 1054 did not seem of really vital importance. It was not, in fact, until the dramatic Western "crusade" of 1204, during our second phase of East-West relations, when Constantinople was sacked and occupied by the Latins, that one may justifiably speak of a "definitive" religious schism between Rome and Constantinople.<sup>14</sup>

The second important event was what has been aptly termed the "political schism" of East and West. The restoration in the West of the Roman Empire in 800 by Charlemagne and the pope was accomplished in direct defiance of Byzantine claims to legitimate imperial succession to the Roman Empire. This event gave rise to the famous "two emperors" question, which was further to aggravate relations all the way to 1453.<sup>15</sup> Both of these events, together with the economic and social as well as political and religious barriers thus erected, seemed further to accentuate the forces of disunity in the former halves of the old Roman Empire and thus to create obstacles to effective cultural communication.

In the second chronological phase, beginning with the First Crusade of 1095, large groups of Latins, ostensibly on their way to the Holy Land, descended upon the East, thus bringing about a mass cultural encounter on Greek soil.<sup>16</sup> The key event in this second period was undoubtedly the conquest and sack of Constantinople in 1204 by Latin Crusader armies, resulting in the destruction of the Byzantine state and the erection of a Latin empire on its ruins. The tragedy of 1204 and the ensuing Latin occupation, with the enforced Greek conversion to the Roman faith, was a traumatic experience for the Greeks; for almost at once it transformed their political and ecclesiastical antagonism toward the West into a mass revulsion, a deep-seated hostility that began to permeate every level of society and would poison all subsequent cultural relations between the two peoples.

And no wonder, if we can believe the testimony of a French knight, Robert of Clari, regarding his participation in the events of 1204. Not only does he write about the cupidity of the Western leaders of the Fourth Crusade in rapaciously seizing the many relics of ancient Christianity preserved in Constantinople (he speaks, for example, of Latin acquisition of "two pieces of the true cross as big as a man's leg"), but he reports that it was the Latin prelates accompanying the armies who turned the expedition into a "holy war" against the



Greeks. Branding the Greeks "traitors and assassins . . . and worse than Jews," the Western clergy, he affirms, even administered absolution to all Western participants in the assault on the Greek capital.<sup>17</sup>

The Byzantines never really recovered from the trauma of 1204 despite the recapture by the forces of Michael Palaeologus of their capital in 1261. Henceforth, in fact, when Byzantines saw Latin expeditions labeled "Crusades" coming to "save" them from the Turks, they inevitably viewed them as robber bands seeking a repetition of the disaster of 1204.<sup>18</sup> And yet, paradoxically, instead of hindering the flow of one people toward the other, the establishment of Crusaders among the native Greek population brought the two peoples, willy-nilly, closer together socially and even culturally.

In this same second period, numerous examples may be cited of Byzantine-Latin social accommodation or symbiosis on both higher and lower levels of society. Westerners—soldiers, merchants, adventurers, colonists, diplomats, clerics, and friar-missionaries—now seemed to be everywhere in Constantinople and the East. Besides the foreigners (all Latins were called "Frangoi"), those who appeared to the Greeks to be ubiquitous were the Gasmules, children of mixed Greco-Latin unions who were looked down upon by all. These hybrids were believed to have inherited the "cunning of the Greeks and the boldness of the Latins"—a phrase that reveals much about the attitudes of the two peoples at the time.<sup>19</sup> Some Greeks disdainfully termed "Latinophrones" (Latin-minded) by their compatriots, thought it fashionable to adopt at least the trappings of Western civilization. Thus, already in the twelfth century the Byzantine emperor Manuel I Comnenus liked to surround himself with Latins in his court. He even delighted in the uniquely Western practice of the joust, often entering the arena of the Hippodrome in order to participate personally. At the same time some Greeks, primarily merchants, and even a few clerics or scholars, began to learn Latin, and on the other hand, many more Latins in the East—court administrators, merchants, mercenaries, or others—were obliged to learn Greek because of practical exigency. Gradually, certain Western expressions began to filter down to the Greek middle and lower classes, for instance, in connection with mercantile practices, in which the enterprising Latins by now had forged far ahead of the Greeks. It was also in this period of Latin penetration that certain



ancient Greek works—of Aristotle, Archimedes, Galen, and others—were for the first time translated (by Latins residing in the East) into Latin, though primarily for the use of Western Scholastics.<sup>20</sup>

An indication, during this period, of a conscious Latin desire to penetrate Byzantine society and culture more deeply, was the plan of the Latin emperor of Constantinople, Baldwin I, seconded by pope Innocent III, "to propagate the Christian religion in the East." Thus, soon after the Latin occupation of 1204, the pope issued a decree for the establishment, in effect, of a branch of the university of Paris in Constantinople. For this purpose he invited "masters and scholars" from Paris "to go to Greece to reform the study of letters"—meaning to instruct young Greeks (and perhaps Muslims) in the Latin form of education as well as in Latin ecclesiastical rites. Whether the plan was actually implemented is doubtful. It is, nevertheless, significant as the first in a series of increasingly numerous Western attempts to infiltrate Byzantine society by striking at its most vulnerable point, the education of the young.<sup>20a</sup> As we shall see, this type of educational program would in time form a veritable pattern for action in future Western endeavors to dominate the East.

Despite more intensive cultural contacts, the Greek populace as a whole came more and more to regard the Latins, and especially their form of Christianity and culture, as inferior, even reprehensible. Already at the end of the twelfth century the Byzantine historian Nicetas Choniates could write with undisguised rancor:

Between us and the Franks has opened up the widest gulf. We have not a thought in common. We are poles apart, even though we may happen to live together in the same house. They are arrogant for the most part, and proudly make pretence of an upright carriage, and affect to look down on the smoothness and modesty of our manners as base and fawning. But we regard their arrogance and boasting and over-bearing as a flux of the snivel which keeps their noses in the air, and we tread them down by the might of Christ who giveth us power to trample unhurt upon the viper and the scorpion.

And another contemporary Greek writer, John Cinnamos, resentful over the fact that, unlike the privileged Venetians, even Byzantine merchants were obliged to pay duties on goods imported to and exported from the Golden Horn, railed at the intermarriage of Latins with Byzantines, calling the Latins (absurdly) "a rotten, clownish, slavish nation."<sup>21</sup> It was perhaps, above all, these privi-



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leged Western merchants, even more than the Latin missionaries and mercenaries, who most irritated the Greeks.

For the Greek people in general especially after 1204, any Byzantine who even deigned to look with favor on the Latin faith came to be viewed as a traitor not only to his church but also to his "nation" and the cultural tradition that these implied. In the words of the Greek masses themselves, such a person had become "Latinized"—a term by then filled not only with religious but with ethnic and cultural overtones. Such were the effects of the collision of the two peoples and their cultures in the Byzantine East, particularly after 1204 and during the years extending up to the Greek recovery of Constantinople in 1261, the event which, as noted, put an end to the Latin Empire. Of course, all these various circumstances tended to diminish any chances for peaceful coexistence between the two peoples.

In our third period, from 1261 to 1453, a new, very disturbing factor entered the picture—the continuing threat of the Ottoman Turks to Constantinople. It was this, more than anything else, that served as the motivating factor for almost all Greek political relations, especially in the seemingly endless negotiations for ecclesiastical union between Rome and Byzantium. In fact, the problem of religious union—with the adamant papal demand for jurisdiction over the Eastern church in exchange for military aid, and the countering Greek insistence on the convocation of an ecumenical council to resolve the religious differences—may be said to have been the underlying theme which bound together almost all East-West diplomacy of the time.<sup>21a</sup> But the problem went far deeper than appeared on the surface. More than a dogmatic question over the *filioque*, more even than a question of Greek relief from Turkish military attacks, it was, to most Byzantines, a question of their very survival as a people, with the individuation of their own religious and cultural tradition. In this phase, when the Byzantines fell into an increasingly defensive posture, Greek apprehensions may be said to have fluctuated not only according to the degree of anxiety the Byzantines felt over the Turkish threat, but—sometimes even more—over what they considered to be Latin aspirations to renewed domination over Constantinople.<sup>22</sup>

Ecclesiastical negotiations, then, became even more complex because they frequently masked deeper Greek feelings of a cultural and psychological nature. The perennial debate that raged in Byzantium over religious union with Rome, especially after the



Council of Lyons in 1274 (see chapter 8), now led some Greek intellectuals, theologians, and statesmen, for the first time in centuries, to take an interest in Latin theology. But this, in many cases, was not so much to satisfy personal curiosity as for them to be able to confront the Latins more successfully by using the Western tool of the Scholastic method.<sup>23</sup> In contrast to this growing group of theologians, there were others to whom the all-important fact was the salvation of the empire from the advancing Turks, an objective, they affirmed, worth a few "minor concessions" on the ecclesiastical side. For this latter group, religious considerations were therefore secondary to political expediency. These unionist *politiques*, probably somewhat greater in number than is today realized, were usually led by persons of the first rank: emperors, an occasional unionist patriarch, or at times by leading officers of the government such as the Grand Logothete (prime minister).

A somewhat different, perhaps truer, type of *Latinophilia* characterized the Byzantine idealist Demetrius Cydones, the remarkable Grand Logothete through much of the fourteenth century. Cydones, who wanted to read the Western chancery reports without interpreters, is reported to have embraced Catholicism as a result of his efforts to learn Latin by reading Thomas Aquinas! However his conversion came about, he adopted certain Latin religious beliefs and values without, in his view, compromising his loyalty to Byzantine culture. So fond, in fact, did Cydones become of the works of Aquinas that he even founded a virtual cult of Thomists in the imperial Byzantine court itself. For Cydones, however (as probably for the Byzantine prelate Bessarion a century later), the problem of religious union with Rome was basically less one of partisan loyalty to the Byzantine church or state than of fidelity to a higher ideal from which would flow, he believed, political, religious, and cultural benefits for *both* Greeks and Latins. This ideal of Cydones—the concept of the unity of Christendom as it had existed in the early centuries of Christianity—suggests that he possessed not only a broad historical vision but, more significantly, a remarkable feeling of tolerance for the divergent cultural tradition of what the average Greek had long termed the "heretical, arrogant Latins."<sup>24</sup>

Despite the fact that some Greek political leaders and even individual patriarchs were, in times of crisis, convinced of the need to make an accommodation to Latin ecclesiastical demands, the instinct of the vast majority of the Byzantine populace for preservation of its



religious and, by extension, cultural heritage never failed. Thus, virtually all the common people, and of course the monks and the lower clergy, together with most of the middle class and part of the nobility, held fast to their religious convictions. To them Orthodoxy (literally "correct belief" in accordance with the views of the Eastern Church Fathers) was the one true faith, transmitted to them through the centuries from their forebears (*patroparadoton*),<sup>25</sup> and it was their sacred duty to preserve it inviolate. Abandonment, in fact, would constitute not only betrayal of their religion and "nation" but, worse, would bring down upon their heads the full wrath of God. Indeed, a current belief held that previous Ottoman successes were owing not only to Muslim moral superiority but to the sins of the Greeks, especially the moral decadence of their clergy.<sup>26</sup>

Deserted by their own emperors, harassed by Greek *Latinophrones* and the violent protestations of monks against union, and courted in addition by the blandishments of papal envoys, many Greeks now suffered a kind of "identity crisis." Not comprehending, or perhaps not even wishing to comprehend, the reasoning of their *politique* leaders, these Greeks became so alienated from their government (which for the sake of political expediency was generally prounionist), that they strove all the more to preserve and even to reinforce their traditional beliefs in their religion and culture. Not that they themselves doubted their own "ethnic" identity. But what they now perceived as an internal as well as an external threat made them reassert that identity even more strongly. Thus, in order to buttress their beliefs, they reemphasized the very roots of their Orthodox religion—the seven ecumenical councils and the writings of the fourth- and fifth-century Greek Fathers of the church. What is truly remarkable, however, is that at the same time a considerable number of the intellectual elite, drawn from the upper middle class and especially the aristocracy, now began to appeal with greater fervor also to the culture of the *ancient* Greeks (Hellenes), with whom they now began, for the first time unequivocally, to indentify as their ethnic as well as their intellectual heirs.

That religious union would lead to Western political domination was not doubted by most Greeks. Not only this, many—subconsciously or otherwise—felt that within a matter of generations cultural domination by the Latins would come about, and ultimately even a considerable assimilation of the Byzantine culture into the Latin. And their fears were not without some justification, if we are



to judge by the plans of two French crusader-propagandists of the fourteenth century. First was Guillaume d'Adam who, seeking to compel Greek cooperation for a joint Latin-Byzantine crusade against the Turks to recover the Holy Land, recommended forcible conversion of the Greeks, suppression of their "fanatical" monks, the burning of "heretical" Greek books, and, in order completely to "brain-wash" the East, the dispatching of the eldest son from each Orthodox family to the West to be reared in the Latin faith.<sup>27</sup> Second was the French publicist Pierre Dubois who, in a *mémoire* to the French king, suggested the sending of educated, noble Latin girls to the East (both to the Greeks and the Saracens) to do charity work in hospitals, the more comely to marry important Greek figures (especially clerics!) with the ultimate aim of converting the entire East to the Latin faith.<sup>28</sup>

More sympathetic to the Greeks, but on that account perhaps more subtly threatening, was the project of an Italian Renaissance humanist monk, the Grecophile Ambrogio Traversari (the first Renaissance humanist, as we shall see, to translate the Greek Fathers into Latin). Three years before the Council of Florence (1438-39), he suggested to Pope Eugenius IV a simple plan for proselytizing Greece through educational means. As he wrote to the pope: "I think that about a hundred very young Greek boys should be brought over [to Italy] and raised in the rites of the Latin church in our monastic house with diligence. For when they are grown, if proper care has been given them, they will serve with particular effect to restore their brethren to the faith and devotion of the Roman church, and they can then be entrusted with their own areas of the church."<sup>29</sup> In almost all spheres, then, political, social, and especially religious, Western plans were proposed to convert the Greeks to "Roman Catholicism" and to force them to adopt certain Western beliefs and practices.

It was no doubt in reaction to Western proposals of this kind that the Greek monk Joseph Bryennios exclaimed to his countrymen in 1400, when he heard of a new Latin expedition to "save" Constantinople from the Turks: "Do not deceive yourselves by delusive hopes that Italian allied troops will come to save us. If they pretend to rise to defend us, they will take arms only to destroy our city, our race, and our name."<sup>30</sup> And in the mid-fifteenth century, the fervently antiunionist George Scholarios proclaimed on the very eve of the Turkish conquest: "O miserable *Rhomaioi* [Greeks], why have you



abandoned the truth . . . and why have you trusted in the Italians? In losing your faith you will lose your city."<sup>31</sup> In the eyes of most Byzantines he might well have added "and your sense of identity as well."

It is understandable, therefore, why the Orthodox religion with its various particularities—use of the Greek language in the ritual, the use of leavened bread in the Eucharist, and, perhaps above all, rejection of the Latin filioque—came most clearly to epitomize to the Greeks the deep cultural and psychological abyss that had opened up between the two peoples. Revealing are the epithets Latins and Byzantines were wont to hurl at each other—epithets that often conflated the religious and the ethnic. The Greeks disparagingly called the Latins "Azymites" (users of unleavened bread in the Eucharist), "Frangoi" (that is, not "Romans"), and "heretics." The Latins responded no less abusively by terming the Greeks "perfidious Greek [not "Roman"] schismatics" or "worse than the Turks."<sup>32</sup>

The Latins, with their supranational church under the pope and the ethnic and political individuation that it permitted, never really understood—or usually even cared to understand—the underlying cultural and ethnic fears of the Greeks. No one, that is, except for a few scholars like the thirteenth-century Latin, Humbert of Romans, or the fourteenth-century Greco-Latin, Barlaam of Calabria, both of whom had lived for years in the Greek East and could therefore comprehend the psychology of a dominated and defensive but still proud people.<sup>33</sup>

In this same third period (1261–1453), amid civil war, disruption of communications, and near collapse of the state structure—in short, pervasive chaos on a scale never before experienced by Byzantium—a truly remarkable but paradoxical development occurred in the East, a Greek cultural and spiritual revival which historians call the "Palaeologan Renaissance." It was the expulsion of the despised Latins from, and the Greek recovery of, their capital city, after a bitter more than half-century of Latin occupation that brought a resurgence of "national" Greek pride, confidence, and patriotism. These feelings of euphoria in turn expressed themselves concretely in a burst of spiritual, artistic, and literary creativity based in large part on a revival of the Greek religious and cultural tradition of the past, ancient as well as early Christian. One explanation for this phenomenon of revival may be that in origin the movement was, at least in its more spiritual, religious phase, inspired by



the response of the many unyielding, arch-conservative Greeks to the oppressive domination (or, to make use of another term, hegemony) of the Latins, especially in the religious and cultural spheres. Byzantine cultural values could best be maintained, many in this group believed, by strictly adhering to and more strongly reasserting their religious roots in the Greek Church Fathers and the ecumenical councils. Seen in this light, the response of this group may be termed a "nativistic" Greek reaction<sup>34</sup> to Latin (as well as Greek Latino-ophile) pressures.

Another important factor in the Palaeologan Renaissance was the reaction of an intellectual group drawn almost exclusively from the higher, aristocratic class. The members of this group sought to maintain their cultural identity not only by reemphasizing the Orthodox faith, but by claiming descent from what they believed uniquely distinguished the Byzantines from all other peoples—that is, their ancient Greek forebears and their culture. This is remarkable, since for centuries to the Byzantines the term *Hellene* was distasteful and meant pagan not Christian.<sup>35</sup> Yet, increasingly for this group of Byzantine intellectuals of the aristocracy, including some of the civil bureaucracy, the strong reassertion of the roots of their civilization in ancient Greek literature and philosophy—a striking phenomenon bearing the characteristics of a revitalization movement—became a prime distinguishing mark of their own culture, in fact, as will be shown later, of a new kind of Greek ethnicity. After all, the West did partake of the classical inheritance even if primarily from the Latin side; and the Orthodox faith was shared with the Slavs. But the Byzantines alone could claim as their cultural patrimony *both* Orthodox and ancient Greek culture.

Paradoxical as the appearance of a "renaissance" may seem in light of the wretched social and political conditions of the late Byzantine period, it is compatible with the thesis of certain modern authorities, for example G. von Grönebaum. These affirm that in time of grave danger to the very fabric of a society, particularly when the peril of assimilation to another culture looms, some kind of cultural revival (or "renaissance") in the form of a virtual digging up of the past may break out among those alienated from the course of compromise or submission being followed by the leaders of that society.<sup>36</sup>

By the early fourteenth century this Byzantine Renaissance, now spreading in various areas of the Greek East, came to manifest itself



primarily in three related yet discrete dimensions: first, a mystical, essentially nonrational movement, Hesychasm, based, so its principal proponents the monks of Mt. Athos maintained, on the writings and practices of the Fathers and earlier mystics of the Orthodox church, especially Symeon the New Theologian of the eleventh century.<sup>37</sup> (Some authorities do not treat Hesychasm as part of the Palaeologan Renaissance, but it is included here because in its wider implications it reflects cultural phenomena of the period.) Second, new emphases in Byzantine art, an art less stereotyped, more humanized, displaying a richer range of colors and intensity of emotion—in short, more realistic and dramatic. This type of artistic expression is a kind of counterpart to the art of the early Italian Renaissance with its first steps toward realism and naturalism in painting<sup>38</sup> (as in the humanistic style of the ancients). But there appeared also in this period, it should be noted, another artistic current, one with its roots more in the traditional Byzantine religious style and which, some scholars believe, seemed in certain ways (in the use of the theme and iconography of Christ's Transfiguration, for example) to reflect in painting the mystical, contemplative spirituality of Hesychasm. Thus, attempts were made to represent the luminosity of the "uncreated" light of Mt. Tabor, which was considered to be discernible to the true Hesychast.<sup>39</sup>

Perhaps still more significant for our study is the renaissance's third dimension. This was a more intensive revival, from the latter part of the thirteenth or beginning of the fourteenth century, on the part of highly educated persons from among the upper and part of the middle class, of the study of ancient Greek culture—not only of the philosophy of Aristotle and the ideas (some long suspect) of Plato, but also of the great tragedies and the rhetorical and poetical works.<sup>40</sup> It is this broad and in some ways contradictory movement—at once spiritual, artistic, and intellectual as well, and inspired to no small extent by the need of many Byzantines for a return to the ancient Hellenic and early Christian past—that is known to modern scholars as the Palaeologan Renaissance. This is not, it should again be emphasized, to exclude other causes, social and intellectual, of this multifaceted, extraordinarily complex movement, such as other internal Byzantine and even certain Western influences,<sup>41</sup> which in one way or another may have challenged or in some way interacted, with the traditional Byzantine culture.

Of the three broad dimensions of the Palaeologan Renaissance—



spiritual, artistic, and intellectual<sup>42</sup>—it was the last, as we shall see, which came to have the most profound impact on the Latin West. With regard to painting, some recent art authorities maintain that the more humanistic, sometimes dramatic, Byzantine artistic style of the late thirteenth and fourteenth centuries somehow influenced (or at least anticipated) the style of the seminal Florentine painter of the Italian Renaissance, Giotto, in bringing similar qualities to Western Renaissance painting. Other scholars argue that this new quality, that of greater "realism" in both Byzantine and Western painting may have been the result of a certain interaction of chains of impulses between the two cultures which have not yet been fully elucidated. Still others, more plausibly perhaps, believe that, after an undisputed infusion of Byzantine influence in Western painting of the twelfth century, there occurred a parallel but independent reaching back in *both* Byzantine and Italian painting to the more humanistic and naturalistic models of the ancient past, more particularly in the West to an imitation of the early Christian frescoes and mosaics in churches of Rome. In any case, the assertion of one distinguished art historian cannot be far from the mark in stating that the solution to the problem of the almost synchronous production by Giotto of his remarkable frescoes in Padua's Arena Chapel, and of the no less remarkable Byzantine frescoes—and mosaics—in the monastery of the Chora in Constantinople, involves a psychological question of the senses, of a particular way of viewing the world, that has to be examined in the context of "the whole problem of the Byzantine and Western world in their estrangement as well as in their kinship."<sup>43</sup>

As for the spiritual revival, Hesychasm—an attempt at a mystical union with God through a method of contemplation and prayer—it doubtless had causes other than simply a desire on the part of the Athonite monks to reassert older East Christian religious and devotional patterns. It has even been looked upon (not so implausibly) as a means of escape from the prevailing uncertainty and despair which accompanied the social chaos of the time.<sup>44</sup> Concentrated on Mt. Athos, Hesychasm, with its peculiar qualities of contemplation and asceticism (for example, the technique of holding the breath while repeating the words of the "Jesus prayer"), soon made its effect felt in nearby Bulgaria, whence it was disseminated to Russia with results that extended deep into the sixteenth and later centuries. Hesychasm, on the other hand, had little if any influence on the



West, where, as we shall see, its theological beliefs in particular were considered to be "innovations" and therefore heretical.

It is sometimes affirmed that it was Hesychasm, with its strong emphasis on asceticism and evident adherence to the traditional formulaic quality of Byzantine iconography, that probably stunted the initial exuberance and experimental verve of the early Palaeologan artistic Renaissance, thereby causing a reversion of Byzantine art to its more traditionally spiritual and less humanized form. The subsequent triumph of the Hesychast monks over the state must, in any case, have been at least partly responsible for blocking the further development of the remarkable manifestations of creativity in mid-fourteenth-century Byzantine art.<sup>45</sup>

The intellectual phase of the Palaeologan Renaissance, with its renewed (and in some instances more profane, that is more "secular")<sup>46</sup> emphasis on classical Greek literature and philosophy, continued in the East as a major force until the fall of the empire in 1453. Though it was in the interest of the Turkish conquerors to keep the Greeks isolated from the Western world, the chief fruits of this extraordinary but still inadequately explored intellectual revival (which in some ways predated the better-known Italian Renaissance and in fact reveals some of the same basic characteristics) were not to be lost to the Western world, as will be discussed in several chapters below.<sup>47</sup>

The fourth and last period in our schema of Byzantine-Latin cultural interaction began in 1453 or, more accurately, some decades before, when, under the increasingly ominous threat of the Turks to Constantinople, more and more Greeks began to flee for sanctuary to the West, often bringing with them the revived classical learning of the Palaeologan Renaissance. This is not to say that individual Greek scholars had not exerted some influence on the West in the past. Nor especially is it to affirm that these refugees had anything to do with the origins of the Italian Renaissance—a movement which, at its inception, was unquestionably the result of the interplay of internal, and especially Italian, factors.

The number of the Greek refugees waxed greater the more the Turkish menace increased, so that soon after 1453 one may justifiably speak of a veritable "diaspora" of Greeks appearing in the Western world. No longer was Constantinople or the East the focal point of contact between Byzantines and Latins. Now, rather, it was the areas of the West, especially Italy, where after 1453 a large number of Greeks had come to live and find employment. Within a few



decades the various Greek colonies established in Italy consisted of virtually all social strata of the lost Byzantine homeland—aristocrats and professional men, soldiers and sailors, artisans and laborers.<sup>48</sup>

Most significant for East-West cultural relations in this last, post-Byzantine period (which one scholar has aptly called "Byzance après Byzance") were the scholars, especially those learned in ancient Greek literature and philosophy as revived in the Palaeologan period. As is well known, with the dawn of the Western Renaissance a vertiable mania for Greek learning soon spread rapidly over the Western world, creating a particularly receptive climate for Greek studies, especially in Italy. One result was that, whereas in the medieval period when Westerners, as we shall note, tended to look upon Byzantine culture with disdain (Latin scholars had then often preferred to get at an ancient Greek work through the medium of medieval Arabic translations—second hand, as it were,)<sup>49</sup> now Italian humanists of the Renaissance were becoming increasingly cognizant of the greater benefits to be derived from direct access to the Byzantine texts, and even more to the Greek émigré scholars themselves.

As time passed, however, some learned Byzantine men came to receive a less cordial reception in the West—especially when Latin scholars, once having mastered Greek, began to rival (on occasion even to revile) the Byzantines not only intellectually but especially in the competition for university posts. Instructive are the cogent words of a Greek émigré, the powerfull Cardinal Bessarion who, ca. 1455, wrote lamentingly to his protégé, the Byzantine humanist Michael Apostolis: "How deeply it grieves me to see our (Greek) people suffering everywhere publicly and privately, esteemed lightly, hated, persecuted, abused. . . . Learn to bear the jealousy flourishing everywhere . . . especially against foreigners, the more so if they are learned men."<sup>49a</sup>

Of the various Greek colonies in the West, most outstanding was that of Venice, which by 1470 had become so large and thriving that the Greek humanist previously noted, Bessarion, could term it "a second Byzantium."<sup>50</sup> Many of the earlier learned Greek refugees, fleeing the Turkish seizure of their homeland, went to Venice via the Venetian-held island of Crete, which thus came to serve as a kind of "halfway point," intellectually speaking, between Byzantium and the West.<sup>51</sup> Greek colonies, as we shall note later, were soon established not only in Venice but in Naples, Ancona, Toledo, and still later in France, Germany, England—even Russia. Whatever the connection



between the Greek colonists and Western European society, it was the individual émigré humanist who, among the many Greeks of the diaspora in the West, contributed most to the movement of the Western Renaissance. Seeking patronage and position, the Greek scholars often chose to reside in the court or residence of their patron instead of within the Greek community, with which, however, they almost invariably maintained close relations (for example, Marcus Musurus). Others obtained positions as professors of Greek at leading Western universities (at Padua, for example, as shall be described in detail),<sup>52</sup> but not always with the approval of their Latin competitors. Nevertheless, the nearby existence of a well-organized Greek community was vital to the Byzantine scholar-refugees in providing them with a sense of ethnic and cultural identity. It may even be said (as will later be shown) that these diaspora communities constituted, at a time when a Greek "nation" as such had ceased to exist, a fundamental but hitherto neglected factor in the emergence of the spirit of modern Greek nationalism.<sup>53</sup>

In establishing a permanent "contact situation" in the West, the learned diaspora Greeks thus became the main protagonists in the final chronological phase of Byzantine-Latin cultural interaction—a phase sometimes overlooked, or more often considered apart from, that of the life of Byzantium proper. The contribution of the diaspora, in fact, was in some ways more immediately productive for the West than that of the Byzantines before 1204, which, as we have already noted, may be termed rather a piecemeal "infiltration" of Byzantine culture into the Latin West. For the Greek émigrés of the fifteenth (and sixteenth) centuries, by bringing to Italy ancient Greek culture as revived by the Palaeologan Renaissance, played a central—if not the seminal—role in reorienting Florentine humanism from an essentially Latin rhetorical movement to a primarily philosophic and literary movement that emphasized ancient Greek civilization with its greater breadth and originality of thought.<sup>54</sup>

To write a truly systematic, detailed study of the cultural interrelations between Byzantines and Latins from the fourth through the sixteenth centuries would be, to say the least, a vast undertaking. Nor have I really attempted that here. Rather, what I have tried to do is, first to delineate in this Prologue the changing social-cultural milieu within which these cultural exchanges and interactions took place, and then, below, to provide a series of chapters illustrative of the more significant facets and dimensions of these patterns of interac-

tion, both in the Middle Ages and in the Renaissance. Using the prologue's four phases of periodization, chronologically speaking, and the tripartite typology suggested for the various modes of cultural influence as a guide to the discussions that follow, the reader, I hope, may be helped toward a clearer understanding of the long, intricate process of acculturation between the kindred Byzantine and Latin worlds—an interaction described here in the encounter of societies, institutions, and individuals.



## The Orthodox Church: The Primary Creative Element in Byzantine Culture

The Byzantine Empire was, technically at least, the Christian form or continuation of the old pagan Roman Empire. By the mid-seventh century, however, it had become almost entirely Greek in culture and outlook; and through the eleventh, and in certain respects up to the thirteenth or even fourteenth centuries, it remained, socially and culturally speaking, the most advanced—certainly the most sophisticated—state in the world. Its gold coin, the *nomisma*, was universally accepted as a kind of dollar of the age. And the refinements of life in Constantinople were legendary not only in the Latin and Arab worlds but even among such semibarbaric peoples as the Vikings of distant Scandinavia. Perhaps one can most readily grasp the importance of the Byzantine state by noting that at the apogee of its power in the early eleventh century, its capital city, Constantinople, contained some eight hundred thousand to one million people, while Paris, perhaps the greatest city of the West, had a mere fifty thousand inhabitants.<sup>1</sup>

There is no need to elaborate further on the preeminence of this state as compared to others of the age, nor to expatiate on the reasons for its decline or its remarkable longevity and tenacity of life, surrounded, as it was, almost continuously by a host of enemies. The significance of the political and economic role of Byzantium is generally recognized today; but its civilization, the accomplishments of its church in particular, are still too little appreciated. Indeed, Byzantine culture is too often regarded not only as something long since dead, but as being of little relevance to the modern Western world. Aside from long-standing Western prejudices arising from the ecclesiastical schism between Rome and Constantinople, a fundamental reason for such neglect is the simple fact that Byzantium as a state no longer exists, though to be sure the modern Greeks, because of a linguistic and religious sense of continuity, believe



themselves (and probably rightly) to be the chief legatees of Byzantine civilization.<sup>2</sup>

Perhaps a more important reason for the neglect of Byzantium's accomplishments is the all too common view that Byzantine culture, though highly refined, was essentially uncreative and unoriginal. And that factor, rightly or wrongly, is for contemporary critics too often the primary criterion for evaluating the worth of artistic or literary expression. While realizing that without Byzantium virtually all of ancient Greek literature and philosophy would have been lost to the modern world, modern scholars at the same time tend to relegate Byzantium to the role of a mere *passive* repository of ancient culture. This is a one-sided view, for in a number of respects Byzantine civilization may be said to have been highly creative; and this creativity, as will be shown,<sup>3</sup> was in no small measure the result of the synthesis, the intermixture, of the thought and ideas of Hellenistic Greek culture with those of Christianity. It was the transformation effected by the amalgamation of these two forces, and especially the spiritual enrichment afforded by the peculiarly Byzantine brand of Christianity (today called Greek Orthodoxy), that gave Byzantine civilization its unique ethos and vitality.

There is no need to analyze this process of fusion between Greek philosophy and literature on the one hand and Christianity on the other or, as scholars put it more simply, between classical reason and Christian faith. It is pertinent, nevertheless, to cite the judgment of the famous German scholar Werner Jaeger, who declared that "the future of Christianity as a world religion depended on this fusion."<sup>4</sup> In the formative early centuries of the church, the period of the ecumenical councils, the Greek Fathers, who played the leading role, in order better to explain rationally the complexities of Christian dogma, often drew on concepts and terms from ancient Greek philosophy, from Platonism, Stoicism, and Aristotelianism.<sup>5</sup> And in this same early period, although many considered Christianity the enemy and even the negation of pagan Greek culture, the leading Greek Fathers advocated with certain exceptions the study of ancient Greek literature and philosophy. St. Basil himself, the "patron" of Orthodox education, in a famous discourse advised (with qualification) the Christian youth to study ancient Greek literature because its ethical values, so similar in general to those of Christianity, were presented in a style remarkable for its persuasiveness and richness.<sup>6</sup>

Out of the synthesis of these two elements, then—Christianity and



Greek thought—a dynamic theology was created. And it was this Greek theology that was primarily responsible for the formulation of Christian philosophy and dogma for the entire Christian church. Though certainly not overlooking the fusion of these two elements, Western scholars sometimes forget that it was the Greek East that developed the so-called *apophatic* approach to theology, the attempt to explain God by a process of negation—that is, by stating what God is not rather than what he is. For if one tries to define what God *is*, then by implication one tends to limit his nature; and God, of course, is uncircumscribable (*aperigraftos*).<sup>7</sup>

Another aspect of the Byzantine church and its activities that merits attention is the high degree of lay participation in church affairs. That was, in part, a result of the ideology of Byzantium. For church and state were closely associated, in fact intertwined. They constituted one organic structure, the whole being an imitation (*mimesis*) on earth of the kingdom of heaven above. Over this entire structure on earth presided the Basileus, or emperor, as the representative of God. As a semisacerdotal figure, though technically still a layman, the emperor possessed certain liturgical privileges reserved only for the clergy. He could cross before the Iconostasis and during the liturgy, preach to the congregation and cense the people. He could even communicate himself—that is, administer the bread and wine of the Eucharist to himself. (To be sure, only a priest could actually consecrate the bread and wine.) Yet it is of primary importance to note that, despite these extraordinary privileges, the emperor could not, on his own, pronounce on or alter church dogma:<sup>8</sup> for the formulation of dogma the convocation of an ecumenical council was required. Indeed, the traditional Feast of Orthodoxy, the day on which in 843 the icons were officially restored to the church, is significant precisely because certain emperors of the eighth and early ninth centuries were blocked by the church in their efforts to destroy the holy pictures and prohibit their veneration by the people.

Of special interest to modern society should be the role played in the Byzantine church by the so-called archons, the chief lay citizens in the cities of the empire. It was one of the archons' duties to protect the church in their respective areas, and in later local councils held in Constantinople, such as in the eleventh century, they even played a role in internal ecclesiastical affairs.<sup>9</sup> To the considerable degree of lay participation in affairs of the Byzantine church one



might also add the fact of the prominence of lay theologians in Byzantium. Both of these points serve to underscore an important difference between the Greek and Roman churches in the Middle Ages. It is, in fact, only in recent years that the Roman church has been witnessing the emergence of a greater voice for laymen in ecclesiastical affairs.

In this connection, it might be pointed out that in today's so-called updating (*aggiornamento*) of the Roman church, several of the changes suggested are practices that have been common for centuries in the Orthodox church—for example, the use of leavened bread, the administering of wine in the communion cup to the laity not to the clergy alone, standing while receiving communion, and the use of the vernacular in the liturgy. There can be little doubt that the Byzantine liturgy is most moving when chanted in the original language (Greek) in which it was composed. It is noteworthy, nonetheless, that the Byzantines themselves, recognizing the significance to the masses of an understanding of the words of the liturgical ceremony, at times permitted the liturgy to be translated into other languages—the prime example being Slavonic. And that translation, fostered in the ninth century by the Greek patriarch Photius and the emperor, is the key to understanding the remarkable Byzantine success in converting the Slavic peoples to Orthodoxy in the face of the determined efforts of the Roman church, which insisted, instead, upon imposition of the Latin liturgy.<sup>10</sup> Not that Byzantium was always so tolerant in its approach to a "vernacular" liturgy. Witness John Chrysostom's attitude toward the Arian Goths of Constantinople in the fourth century, and evidence of other Byzantine insistence on the use of only the three "sacred" languages—Greek, Hebrew, and Latin—in preference to Slavonic.<sup>11</sup>

The long historical rivalry, even bitter animosity, between Rome and Constantinople is today happily diminishing, and the two churches are drawing closer to one another. Nevertheless, the most basic problem of all still remains—papal claims to jurisdiction over the entire Christian church. Several years ago in Constantinople I inquired of His Holiness, the late Patriarch Athenagoras, that most irenic of church leaders, how this seemingly insurmountable obstacle between the churches could be resolved. His answer was revealing and perhaps prophetic: "It may be that the Roman church itself will resolve this question." And recent trends in the Roman church, though diverse in scope, seem to be beginning to fulfill his prediction.



Another aspect of Byzantine ecclesiastical culture that deserves mention for its creativeness is the character of its spirituality. In Orthodox spirituality perhaps the prime concept is that of *theosis*—that is, the belief that through prayer, dedication, and contemplation (*Hesychia* in Greek) one may, already in this life, achieve a degree of mystical union with God. True, the most famous Byzantine Hesychasts, those of the fourteenth century, were monks withdrawn from the world and living on Mount Athos, and their techniques for achieving a state of contemplation were not always accepted. But their influence was felt widely in Byzantine society and soon spread to Bulgaria, whence, ultimately, they had a great influence on the Muscovite *Startsi* (holy men) who, as is well known, played a considerable role in the turbulent political and social life of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Russia.<sup>12</sup>

Union with God can, of course, also be achieved through receiving the Eucharist, the partaking of the body and blood of Christ under the appearance of the bread and wine—a sacrament that possesses the same degree of efficacy for laymen, clerics, and monks alike.

The Eucharist, or Communion, is the central mystery of the sacrifice of the Mass, or the Divine Liturgy as it is called in the Orthodox church. By offering himself in preparation for communion, as an oblation in union with the sacrifice of the Mass, the communicant is able to achieve a closer union with God during the liturgy. The Orthodox liturgy, in effect the enactment of the life and passion of Christ, is in every way—visually, symbolically, and musically—a true work of art.<sup>13</sup> The liturgy, in particular the hymnody of the church, as is too little appreciated in the West, in fact constitutes one of the most creatively original aspects of Byzantine civilization. E. Wellesz of Oxford University maintains that the greatest Byzantine hymns, as artistic creations, are equal to, and in some cases even surpass, the best of the Roman church.<sup>14</sup> It must be admitted, however, that comparison is difficult to make. Take the moving Western hymn *Stabat Mater* (“The Mother was Standing”). As one listens to it one can feel the sorrow, the very human emotion of the mother as she sees her son hanging on the cross. Then consider the greatest of the Byzantine hymns, the *Akathistos Hymnos*. Here the aim is quite different, not to evoke in the listener the human emotions of this world but rather, one might say, a higher, more spiritualized emotion of the celestial world above.



This exalted quality of Byzantine hymns unfortunately cannot be adequately reproduced in translation. One can, nevertheless, note the technical devices, literary and musical, used by the Byzantine hymnographer (probably Romanus the Melodos) to produce this effect. The internal rhythm of the lines, the repetition of key phrases such as *Haire nymfe anymfefte* ("Hail bride unmarried," literally "unbrided"), the acrostic starting of each line with a new consecutive letter of the Greek alphabet, the intonation of the words chosen for their onomatopoeic effect, and finally, the remarkably pure sound of the chanting, devoid of any harmony whatever, much like Gregorian chant—all of these devices produce for the listener a lofty, ethereal quality perhaps unmatched in the entire range of liturgical literature.<sup>15</sup>

One can hardly speak of Byzantine hymnody without referring to the best-known cultural product of the Byzantine church, its art. Today Byzantine art is popular and widely studied, and this in part because, like most modern art, it is not literal, not merely photographic: it is symbolic, or at least semirepresentational, in character. Moreover, in its richness and variety of color, its stylization and subtlety of line, it has rarely been equaled. The extraordinary depth of expression produced by the surviving Byzantine mosaics, little pieces of colored glass placed together at different angles in order to refract light, is well known. The celebrated stained-glass windows of Gothic cathedrals produce something of the same effect, and it has recently been suggested by several Western scholars that these too may have received an initial stimulus from prototypes produced earlier by the craft of the Byzantine window glazier.<sup>16</sup> (Among the Byzantines, of course, the full aesthetic potential of stained glass was not realized, as it was in the West.)

As in hymnody, Byzantine painting also sought to represent the sublimity of the other world. Nevertheless, despite its remarkable qualities, some modern critics (in some cases perhaps justifiably) tend to feel surfeited with what they consider to be the overly repetitious, sometimes even stereotyped, quality of Byzantine painting. But they fail to see that, in the last two centuries of the empire before its fall in 1453, one line of development in Byzantine art (and also in spirituality, as we have seen) underwent a surprising "renaissance" in which certain changes of style were manifested in Byzantine creativity. Thus we see in this new "revival" of Byzantine art—whether technically it be termed Macedonian or Constantinopolitan does not matter



—a new trend toward “realism,” toward a more humanized quality which, however, in another current was combined with the older, more, traditional ethos.<sup>17</sup> New, more daring colors (brilliant yellows, for example) were now utilized and the figures were often elongated for special effect.<sup>18</sup> Such kinds of paintings may still be seen in Crete, Mistra, Constantinople, and also Mt. Athos at the Protaton in the works of the fourteenth-century Athonite artist, Manuel Panselinos.<sup>19</sup>

But the climax to this new artistic development was reached in two late Greek painters who worked primarily in Russia and Spain. The first, Theophanes the Greek of the fourteenth century, worked for a time in Constantinople where his works or his pupils' remain in the Church of the Chora. Little known to the Western world except to specialists, Theophanes is familiar in Russia as “Feofan Grek,” who was probably (as recently stressed by V. Lazarev), the teacher of the greatest Russian painter, Rublev.<sup>20</sup> The best paintings of Theophanes are in the Kariye Camii and in Novgorod and in the Cathedral of the Assumption in the Kremlin itself. The second was born some fifty years after the fall of Constantinople, the great sixteenth-century painter Domenikos Theotokopoulos, better known as El Greco, who is often mistakenly referred to as Spanish. Born and raised in Crete in the early sixteenth century, he went for four years to Venice and later to Spain, where he spent the remainder of his life. But it is notable that he never failed to sign all his later paintings in Greek characters “Domenikos Theotokopoulos the Cretan.” Indeed, a notarial document recently found indicates that he was probably still living in Heracleion, Crete, until the reasonably mature age of twenty-five. Hence, his technique and style as a painter were presumably to a large extent already formed before he emigrated to the West.

Both artists may perhaps be considered as the supreme exponents of the last, too little-known revival of Byzantine painting. They used the rich new colors and forms while retaining the old tradition of Byzantine symbolism. At the same time they portrayed their figures in a new way, with greater emotion and more dynamism, and sometimes in an elongated manner for greater effect. In the eyes of the viewer their works are able, as one scholar has put it, to produce the effect of man's flesh striving toward spiritual reality. (On the two “Grecos” see esp. chap. 3, Prologue, and Epilogue).<sup>21</sup>

In architecture, too, Byzantium was genuinely creative. In the construction of Hagia Sophia, for example, it was able to solve, for



the first time on such a grand scale, the tremendously difficult technical problem of erecting a huge dome over a square space. (The Pantheon in Rome entails the easier problem of a round dome over a round area.) Incidentally, it is hard to believe, as has been confirmed, that St. Sophia's dome is actually twenty-six feet higher than vaults of the most spacious Gothic cathedral, that of Beauvais. Yet so light is St. Sophia's dome that, as several Byzantine writers put it, it seemed to hang "suspended from heaven" (see below, chapter 5).<sup>22</sup> No wonder that in the late tenth century, according to the primary Russian Chronicle, the Russian envoys to Constantinople reported to their master, the grand duke Vladimir of Kiev, that when assisting at the celebration of the liturgy in St. Sophia they thought they "were in heaven itself."<sup>23</sup>

We come finally to an aspect of Byzantine life and civilization with which the church is again closely associated but which is generally overlooked—the Byzantine administrative system. The Byzantine administrative organization, civil as well as ecclesiastic, with its many titles, ranks, insignia, and protocol, was one of the most carefully structured in history. But, like that of Washington D.C. in our day, it grew eventually so complex as to be at times almost unwieldy. Nonetheless, from two Byzantine treatises on administration that remain (the *De Cerimoniis* of Emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus and the *Pseudo-Codinus*, of the tenth and fourteenth centuries, respectively),<sup>24</sup> one can see that the system was not static and that throughout the centuries it underwent evolution in response to the demands of a changing society.

To take one title or rank as an example, in the early centuries the Domestic was in charge of the Scholae, a branch of the guard troops of Constantinople. By the thirteenth century the title "Grand Domestic" was exalted and came to be applied to the supreme head of the state's armed forces. In the late Byzantine period, some titles, because of the constant diminution of the empire's power and the contraction of its territory, became purely honorific—that is, titles with no really functional duties attached to them. This fact and the circumstance that the Byzantines found it difficult to discard titles sometimes makes it difficult for modern scholars to ascertain exactly what each title meant at a given time.<sup>25</sup>

The church, though it had some services and officers in common with the state, in the main possessed its own officials and had its own carefully prepared lists of clerical and lay officials attached to or



serving it. According to an edict of the sixth-century emperor Justinian, the Cathedral of Hagia Sophia, or the "Great Church" as it was always called, was to be provided with a huge staff of sixty priests, a hundred deacons, forty deaconesses, ninety subdeacons, a hundred readers, twenty-five chanters, and a hundred custodians. The lavishness of the service must have been remarkably impressive.<sup>26</sup>

A further complication for modern historians regarding Byzantine titles is that, after the Turkish capture of the capital in 1453, the Greek Patriarch Gennadius continued not only to be the religious head of the Orthodox church but was appointed by the sultan as the "civil" head of all Orthodox people subject to the Turks, including Bulgars, Serbs, and Albanians, as well as Greeks.<sup>27</sup> As heir to the tradition of the old Empire, the patriarch during the Turkish period ("Turkokratia") introduced some new titles into the patriarchal court that were often adapted from those of the old Byzantine imperial court. Here are a few examples of new titles or those carried on from the patriarchal court of the earlier period, most of which are still utilized today in the Patriarchate of Constantinople. *Megas Chartophylax* was an old title which by the fourteenth century designated the chief patriarchal official who, along with his other duties, administered the patriarchal chancery. *Megas Protekdikos* was a title which seems to have been held by one who protected the rights of ecclesiastical property. The *Megas Referendarios*, mentioned in the ecclesiastical sources from very early times, held the delicate position of liaison officer between the patriarch and the emperor.

Besides these, in the Byzantine and Turkish periods there were, around the patriarch, other dignitaries of lesser importance, whose function it was to help him carry out his many other duties. For instance, the *Megas Rhetor* (Grand Orator) was a professor at the patriarchal school who was especially skilled at biblical interpretation. Other dignitaries helped to keep the patriarchal records, and were in charge of the holy vessels of the church and vestments worn by the high prelates,<sup>28</sup> and, more important, of the sacred relics of Christ and the Apostles. Of these relics Constantinople, before its sack by the Latins in 1204, had probably possessed more than the rest of the world combined.<sup>29</sup> These relics were the subject of many pages written by several Western crusader-knights who participated in the Fourth Crusade that seized Constantinople—notably Robert of Clari and William Villehardouin. These eyewitnesses refer especially to the true cross, the sponge, the crown of thorns, and the relics that served



as the special protectors of "the city," the Virgin's robe and girdle.<sup>30</sup> At the head of this latter group of "service" officials was the *Megas Skevophylax* (grand sacristan) and also the *Myrepsos* (overseer of the Holy Chrism). *Aktuarios* (court physician) is an interesting title utilized in the patriarchal court after 1453, which had been applied to the imperial court physician.<sup>31</sup> Obvious is its connection with the English word *actuary*—he who assigns insurance rates according to a calculated life span.

Constantinople was famous for its university (the first in medieval Europe), in which its civil servants were trained. But the capital city had, and still possesses, a patriarchal school for training in theological studies and ecclesiastical "letters." Certain titles, in fact, were reserved specifically for those contributing to the furtherance of education in the Orthodox church, especially laymen. Besides *Megas Rhetor* (Grand Orator) there is the title of *Didaskalos tou Evangeliou* (teacher of the Gospel), *Didaskalos tou Apostolou* (teacher of the Apostle-reading), and *Didaskalos tou Genous* (teacher of the people), the latter an old title held, among others, by the great patriot of the nineteenth-century Greek Revolution, Adamantios Koraes.<sup>32</sup> The *Orphanotrophos* (literally "caretaker of orphans"), a Byzantine ecclesiastic in the civil service of the imperial court, was, especially in the twelfth century, in charge of what one today would call "social work." He headed the Great Orphanage in Constantinople, which had a hospital attached to it, then the most advanced in Europe, with special doctors and wards for various diseases.<sup>33</sup> Naturally, in the Byzantine patriarchal court there were certain offices reserved for those in charge of liturgical ceremonies and chanting. These held such titles as *Protopsaltes* (first chanter), *Lambadarios* (in charge of candles) and so on. Another title of honor, granted to laymen as recognition of special service to the church, was that of *Ostiarios*, the person in charge of the great doors of St. Sophia.<sup>34</sup>

The various modern ecclesiastical *officia*, as they still exist today in the Greek ecumenical patriarchate, reach back at least five hundred and sometimes as far as a thousand years.<sup>35</sup> Every title has some significant historical association either with the Byzantine church or with the imperial court, both of which played, as we have seen, closely related roles in the formation of Byzantine civilization.

Indeed, the church was probably the most fundamental force in the creative vitality of Byzantine culture. The unique blend of Byzantine Christianity, Greek (more accurately "Hellenistic") learning,



and certain Eastern elements in the mature Byzantine cultural synthesis, still finds its living expression in the Greek Orthodox church, particularly in the institution of the patriarchate of Constantinople. The patriarchate is, in fact, as striking an example as it is possible to find in the modern world, of the continued viability of the most creative of Byzantine institutions, the Eastern Orthodox church.



## Religion and "Nationalism" in the Byzantine Empire and After: Conformity or Pluralism?

In examining the complex problem of the relationship between religion and nationalism, it would be hard to find a more intricate case than that of the Byzantine Empire. Many medieval historians consider the empire, especially in the sixth century under Justinian with its far-flung territories of East and West and at its height in the early eleventh, to be the classic case of a multinational state which, despite an extreme diversity of peoples, was able not only to survive but to prosper. The sense of unity that maintained this empire is believed to have come primarily from the absolute authority of its ruler, the Basileus, and—perhaps even more—from its official religion, Orthodoxy, the very name of which means "the one true religion."

Closer scrutiny, however, of this apparent unity of church and state, or more precisely of the conformity of all citizens to the religion of the state, exposes a number of difficulties and irregularities. Though by law it was necessary to adhere to Orthodoxy, there were exceptions. Jews, for instance, in the old Roman imperial tradition, were throughout the entire period more or less tolerated—if grudgingly—in the practice of their religion.<sup>1</sup> And at various times such groups as Arabs living *within* imperial territory were unofficially granted special permission, or at least were left unmolested, to follow the Muslim religion. An extreme example of this kind of toleration is the case of the Armenians.<sup>2</sup> Though essentially related to the much persecuted Monophysite groups, they, partly because of the strategic importance of Armenia as a buffer state and perhaps because of their services as soldiers or merchants, were often permitted to retain their religious beliefs even when they fled to the empire for sanctuary. Yet even the case of the Armenians is not uniform. For especially in the ninth to eleventh centuries, when entire Armenian clans emigrated to Constantinople, opportunistically or not they embraced



Orthodoxy. And when a series of Armenians ascended the imperial throne, they became more intransigently Orthodox than the Greeks themselves—to the point, it seems, of even persecuting their own former coreligionists. Another nuance making for complexity in our problem is that though hordes of barbarians or semibarbarians, especially Slavs, were converted to Orthodoxy and entered the empire, other even more numerous converted peoples remained technically *outside* the empire. Indeed, several of these Slavic nations that were at one time part of the empire were later permitted, when they became politically independent, to set up autocephalic Orthodox churches of their own. These, however, remained closely bound to, and recognized the jurisdictional authority of, the patriarch of Constantinople.<sup>3</sup>

With the life of the empire extending over one thousand years, the relation between religion, or its administrative aspect the church, on the one hand, and its political counterpart the state, on the other, with regard to the question of religious unity or pluralism, exhibits certain identifiable characteristics during various periods of Byzantine history. And the pattern of change or evolution permits us to advance the thesis that, in general, Orthodoxy and the sense of nationhood became more closely intertwined the more serious the crises—external and sometimes internal or both—that threatened the existence of the state. It is, of course, difficult in a chapter of this length to propose a schema that will accurately reflect all the shifting nuances of these relations. Yet for the sake of analysis we may, I think, speak of three broad chronological stages.

The first begins with Constantinople's foundation in 330 and extends until after the great crisis precipitated by the Byzantine territorial losses of Egypt, Syria, and Palestine to the Arabs in the late sixth and seventh centuries. It is at the end of this period, ca. 717, when Byzantium had been stripped of these eastern Semitic provinces—areas that had always felt somewhat alien to Asia Minor, the Balkans, and southern Italy—that for the first time we may speak of a truly Byzantine, in a sense of a more or less Greek, empire. Indeed, so deep was the trauma to the state that, to ward off the continuous threat of Arab invasion and to placate the Eastern Monophysites, whose religious views bore a distant resemblance to the Arab, several emperors even sought to "dilute" certain tenets of Orthodoxy.<sup>4</sup> These emperors' concept of religion was, one might say, supra-national. They believed that by manipulating the religious for-



mulas of Orthodoxy—of course they always claimed, rather, to preserve them—they could obtain beneficial political results, namely, unitary allegiance to the state, if only they could force the official organs of the church to assent. But their attempts also reveal, from the view of the dissident Monophysites, the even greater significance of the close relationship between religion and "nationalism." Historians have, in fact, long asserted that these Monophysite peoples opposed the Chalcedonian dogmatic formulation of 451, less for purely religious than for ethnic and cultural—that is, "nationalist"—reasons.<sup>5</sup>

It should be noted that the word *nationalism*, with its modern, strongly secular implications, is inappropriate for use in any medieval context. Henceforth I shall prefer to use the term *ethnicity*, the self-consciousness of the Byzantine people of whatever origin, that they belonged to or owed allegiance to one political organism, the empire.

The second phase for consideration would extend from about 717 to the time of the Crusades, which brought East and West into contact—indeed conflict—on a scale greater than ever before. This crusading movement culminated in the Fourth Crusade of 1204, with the seizure of Constantinople by Western armies and the dismemberment of the Byzantine Empire. In this second, middle phase, in which the empire was at first reduced in size but then once more began to grow in strength, the primary religious phenomena were the Iconoclastic struggle, the conversion of the Slavic peoples, and the schism with Rome in 1054.

With the recapture of the capital by the Greek troops of Michael Palaeologus in 1261, we may consider that a third period began, which in turn extended to 1453, the fall of Constantinople to the Turks. In this third and final stage, when the empire had become territorially a mere shadow of its former self, the identification of religion and ethnicity became even closer under the impact of the Turkish advance. But, as we shall see, the two were most truly to coincide under the more insidious danger posed simultaneously by the West which, in the eyes of most Byzantines, threatened, through ecclesiastical union with Rome, to engulf in more ways than territorially what remained of the people of the empire.

A word of caution—most of the phenomena, especially the ideologies described as belonging to the first phase, carry over into the second, and some also into the third. It is sometimes only the emphases that change; at times, in fact, there is a kind of cyclical re-



turn to earlier emphases—or to state it perhaps more precisely, the emphasis on religion remains but its conjunction with other elements is altered. The main differences, however, as we shall see, will occur in the third stage, when the political and social status of the empire has so changed, the differences between theory and reality become so glaring, that a new type of feeling emerges with which Orthodoxy can identify and strengthen itself.

Let us begin with the first phase. What distinguished the Roman Empire of Augustus from that of the Byzantines was not so much the displacement of old Rome by the new capital, Constantinople, as the creation of a *Christian* Roman Empire. Indeed, the concept of the empire, and of its ruler the emperor, was now cast into the form of Christian political theory. And an understanding of this basic Christian political ideology formulated early by Constantine's Bishop Eusebius is indispensable to any scrutiny of the relations between the Byzantine religion and its sense of nationhood.<sup>6</sup> According to the developed Eusebian formulation, the emperor is the vicegerent of God, the mimesis or "living icon of Christ" ("zosa eikon Christou"), and he rules the *Basileia*, the Christian commonwealth, which is in turn the terrestrial counterpart of God's kingdom in heaven. Since there was only one God, it followed inevitably that there could be only one empire and therefore only one true religion. Hence all Byzantine theoreticians and panegyrists firmly believed, without exception so far as I am aware (except perhaps at the very end), that unity of the empire entailed—nay demanded—unity of religion.<sup>7</sup> Otherwise the empire would become a sacrilege before God, and Constantinople would lose its claim to being God-guarded, the special preserve of the Virgin and the saints. This view, though obtaining throughout its history, was strongly reflected in the earlier periods, when the empire contained within its borders many diverse peoples: besides the Greeks of the Balkans, Asia Minor, south Italy, Sicily, and south Russia, also Copts of Egypt, in addition to Armenians, Georgians, Syrians, "Italians," Berbers, and later some of the many Slavs who were converted.

By the time of Justinian (sixth century) the culture, at least that of the upper classes in the cities, had become predominantly Greek, as had the language of the court. Yet among the lower classes of the peoples enumerated, it must be assumed that, for the bulk of those outside the towns, their primary language could not have been Greek. Hence, although Greek culture then had some importance,



what basically served to preserve unity in this earlier period of a multiracial or multinational empire, would appear to have been the two *universal* Christian institutions—the emperor and the Orthodox church. As already stressed, these two were closely tied; indeed, the Byzantine church and state in many ways formed one organic unity. But of course the broad problem of the unity of church and state, which is somewhat different from that under investigation, cannot be analyzed in its entirety here.

It goes without saying that if the emperor was not considered Orthodox, allegiance to him was considered to be dissolved. This may be clearly seen in the requirement imposed by the patriarch on all emperors, beginning with Anastasius at the end of the fifth century, that each take an oath to defend the inviolability of the seven ecumenical councils and the official creeds of the church.<sup>8</sup> But note that this was an oath explicitly to preserve the tenets of Orthodox *religious* belief rather than of any particular *civil* aspect of government. Despite the unwritten constitution of Byzantium, no one ever really questioned the traditional absolute authority of the emperor in civil affairs.<sup>9</sup>

Beginning with Byzantium's foundation—and this is an ideology that persisted even until 1453—the Byzantines looked upon their empire (Basileia) as *the* political organization sanctioned by God for the world. The chief requirement for admission to this Basileia was conversion to Orthodoxy. And through this means many barbarian peoples, sometimes even of extreme cultural backwardness, were able to enter into the Byzantine *ecumene*. Once converted, another process, that of cultural adaptation or even in some cases assimilation, began. Yet though, as noted, many of those converted did enter the empire to become citizens, other peoples, such as the Moravians and especially the Russ—not to omit the Bulgars who entered but who managed forcibly to break away—remained *outside* the borders of empire. For them religious conversion, while effective, did not in itself result in a feeling of ethnic solidarity with Byzantium. True, the distant Russ, though technically not belonging to the empire, were provided with Greek metropolitans to head their church until virtually the end of the Byzantine period.<sup>10</sup>

Paradoxically, the Orthodox religion, rather than serving to integrate these other peoples into the empire, was able, according to certain modern historians, to provide them at critical stages of their development with a political and religious ideology that made



for greater unity—an ethnicity, we might say—in their own previously disunited society. Despite these ramifications (some of which would apply to our second period as well as to the first), the rulers of such peoples as the Russ, the Bulgars, the Moravians, the Armenians (and even the Venetians) were granted and were extremely proud to accept titles in the imperial hierarchy of ranks and dignities, or, as it has been termed, in the Byzantine "family of princes." Thus, because of these specifically religious, cultural, and loose political ties—they were not ethnic—such peoples were considered part of what has been called the Byzantine "commonwealth," or as I would put it, the community of Orthodox Christendom.<sup>11</sup> In this unusual relationship between Byzantium and these satellites, there is often present, however, a tension which expressed itself alternately in attraction for and repulsion to the influence of Byzantium. For, as the new nations drew closer to Constantinople and the magnetism of its civilization grew overly attractive, they feared a loss of their own ethnic identity, which they sometimes expressed even in wars on Byzantium.<sup>12</sup>

Within the empire some exceptions were unofficially allowed to the general principle that all citizens must accept the precepts of the Orthodox faith. Mention has been made of the special cases of the Jews and the Armenians. There are also examples of Latins passing through Constantinople as pilgrims or even remaining as residents (the mercenary Western Varangian guard, for instance),<sup>13</sup> who were permitted to worship according to the Latin faith. There was, moreover, an Arab mosque in Constantinople and at least several Latin churches in Galata, as well as, in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, an Amalfitan monastery on Mt. Athos.<sup>14</sup> On the other hand, the Nestorians and, even more, the numerous Monophysite heretics of the fifth to seventh centuries and the Paulicians of the ninth and tenth, were subjected to the fullest coercion available to state power. How best to explain this paradox?

The tolerated groups were considered to be special exceptions, and the overall principle of religious unity, it must be underlined, was therefore not sacrificed. For this was considered to be absolutely indispensable for the survival of the empire as it was then constituted. In the case of small, dissident groups such as Jews and the earlier Arabs, who had no overwhelming zeal to proselytize, no real danger to the state was posed. But in the extreme intransigence of the very numerous Monophysites (comparable to that of the early



Christian martyrs) they already seemed to possess, partly because of their religious beliefs, a kind of national or ethnic unity. Since they placed allegiance to their "ethnic" traits above allegiance to the emperor, they threatened—religiously—not only to alter the purity of Orthodox dogma but—politically—to unglue the unity of the entire empire. In the case of the Paulicians, who believed that matter is evil and that therefore human institutions are invalid, the danger of destruction of the very fabric of Byzantine society and of the state organization itself was present.<sup>15</sup>

Accordingly, the Orthodox faith served in a very real sense as the basis not only for the emperor's authority but for the very existence of the empire, and it was therefore considered the palladium of the life of the state.<sup>16</sup> This must be understood not only from the theoretical side but from the practical viewpoint as well. The cumulative effect of every peasant and city-dweller every Sunday in every parish of the vast empire, hearing the purity of the faith in effect equated with the power of the empire, cannot be underestimated. And yet, paradoxically, the doctrinal views of the Nestorians and especially of the Monophysites, as related to the definition of the Council of Chalcedon, were closer to those of Orthodoxy than were those of the Jews or the Paulicians. One may recall the old adage that it is the enemy who works from within who is the more dangerous, especially if his view is very similar.

But were there other factors besides allegiance to the two universal institutions, the emperor and the church, that contributed to a sense of unity among the Byzantines? In the earliest stages of Christianity, pagan Greek culture had been the chief enemy: then, to be called a Hellene meant to be considered a pagan. But with the remarkable process of the fusion, or rather integration, of pagan literature and philosophy into Christianity—one might say the acculturation of classical learning to Christianity—it became standard for the educated classes in all areas of the empire to be instructed both in the precepts of the Orthodox religion and, to a considerable extent, in those of ancient Greek literary and philosophic learning. Nevertheless, especially in this earlier period, though we find some important scholars of the Greek classics, Orthodoxy seems, explicitly at least, to have been more emphasized than classical culture.<sup>17</sup> In this first period from 330 to about 717, then, we may see that in the ethnically nonhomogeneous state of Byzantium, despite the growing signif-



icance of Greek learning, the Orthodox religion in conjunction with the state was the basic factor for the preservation of political unity.

During the second period, that between the Arab conquest of the Byzantine Semitic provinces and the era of the Crusades, the empire became still more Greek in culture. And with the elimination of non-Greek elements, the consolidation of Byzantium into a more culturally homogeneous state began. It was in this period that, for reasons still unclear, several emperors tried to alter—common opinion held they were altering—the basic beliefs of Orthodoxy by decreeing the destruction of the holy icons. This brought about a dramatic struggle lasting over a century in which church and state were shaken to their very foundations. These emperors, however, were finally defeated and Iconoclasm declared heretical.

Among the theories advanced by historians for the initiation of Iconoclasm is one affirming that, aside from theological reasons, the emperor Leo III was attempting to conciliate the Arab rulers.<sup>18</sup> Strange as this may sound, it is not impossible, given the existence in the Arab Empire, first, of great numbers of Orthodox Christians who might be persecuted, and second, of heretical Monophysite Christians within the Byzantine Empire, whose emphasis on the singularity of Christ's nature was not far distant from Arab monotheism. What connection this point would have had with the thesis of conformity or pluralism of faith at this time can only be speculated upon. In any event, with the triumph of the icons, allegiance to the emperor after this conflict remained more or less the same as before in civil matters, though the authority of the patriarch in purely ecclesiastical affairs seems to have waxed greater. This was largely owing to the resistance of the iconophile leaders Theodore of Studios and John of Damascus, whose virtual identification of Orthodoxy with the integrity of the empire and consequent emphasis on absolute religious conformity tended to exalt the role of the faithful head of the church, the patriarch.

It was in this period that the law code, the *Epanagoge*, even if not actually promulgated, was composed, which attempted to define somewhat more clearly the spheres of authority between church and state. In this connection we find in some sources an appellation now applied to the patriarch which previously had been applied only to the emperor, "the icon of Christ." The increase in patriarchal authority, in Byzantine eyes, may be seen in the iconographic



representations of emperor and patriarch standing side by side in the manner of Moses and Aaron, instead of the emperor's appearing, as formerly, in a posture very superior to that of the patriarch.<sup>19</sup>

It was in this second stage also that the momentous conversion of the Slavs took place. As is well known, an important if not the main reason for the ultimate success of the Byzantines in this respect was their permitting the liturgy to be translated into the vernacular language of the Slavs (thus making it immediately more meaningful to them), in contrast to the papacy, whose policy it was, in the long run, to insist on the exclusive use of Latin.<sup>20</sup> This is, perhaps, as striking an example as can be found to show the significance of the relation between "ethnicity" and religion. One may justifiably speculate whether such a success could have been achieved at all without recourse to use of the vernacular. In my view—though this is of course highly hypothetical—such a permissive, tolerant attitude on the part of the Byzantine authorities of church and state in the earlier period of the Persian and Arab turmoil, when the state was in a very enfeebled condition, would have been less likely. And indeed much later, in our third period, when a much weakened Byzantium, as we shall see, was virtually to identify completely its Greek culture with its ethnic identity, such flexibility would have been even more implausible. The fact that the great Slavic conversions took place when Byzantium was entering the apogee of its political power would suggest a necessity for the precondition of political stability and imperial power during any serious activities involving changes in church practices and customs.

While the Slavs were being converted, the problem of the connection between religion and ethnicity in the form of the liturgy came again to the foreground in another respect. This time it involved a dispute between Greeks and Latins. Ill feeling between East and West had, of course, been growing from earlier times. Associated closely with the ecclesiastical rivalry of Rome and Constantinople was the Greek disdain for the West because of the "spurious" claims of the Holy Roman emperors to world hegemony and, culturally, the low level of civilization prevailing in the West up to at least the First Crusade. In this connection one point may be clarified here: that when the Greeks, as often happened, criticized Latin as a barbaric language—as even Patriarch Photius did—they often had in mind, and quite correctly, I believe, not the classical Latin of Cicero but the corrupt, vulgar Latin then prevailing in the West (see below, chap. 4, n. 49).



Ecclesiastically speaking, besides the basic question of papal claims to jurisdiction over the entire, including the Eastern, church, the significant question that now came to the fore, and with particular emphasis in the schism of 1054, was the question of the use of the azymes in the liturgy—that is, whether the Eucharistic bread should be unleavened, as was Western usage, or leavened, as was Greek custom.<sup>21</sup> Today this question may seem rather inconsequential; but as time went on it gradually assumed, as has not hitherto been stressed, a cultural as well as a religious meaning, and finally, because of the widening differences between East and West, strong ethnic overtones. Thus we may note that certainly by the eleventh century, and more so later, a common name applied to the Latins by the Byzantines was simply the disparaging "azymites." (see chap. 8). Once again we observe the significance of the liturgy as a bearer or expression of cultural identity. For although in the last analysis they were coreligionists, the growing antipathy between Latins and Greeks tended in the spirit of the age to find expression in the public services of the church. In the liturgy were reflected not only such basic cultural differences as language but the development of theories and practices characteristic of the mentality of each people.

It is interesting that for the Greeks the Latins, the azymites who had altered the original creed by adding the filioque, were considered heretics, whereas to the Latins the Greeks were, technically at least, schismatics. Though in a basic sense this difference reflects, rather, questions of dogma and ecclesiastical organization, one is tempted to believe that it also indicates that the Greeks, fearful of the motives of the West and increasingly on the defensive politically and culturally, already in this period felt more of an identification between ethnicity and culture than the Latins did.

We shall skip over the period of the first Crusades, with its growing estrangement of East and West, to come to the Fourth Crusade, with the sack of Constantinople by the Western armies under the banner of the cross, and the resultant division of Christendom into two opposing blocs. It was the Latin victory of 1204 more than anything else that henceforth made the religious schism final and irremediable. From this event on we can, I believe, for the first time validly speak of a "*Roman Catholic*" church in contrast to a "*Greek Orthodox*" one. In the West the Roman church, or rather the papacy, as a supranational institution (somewhat like the Byzantine Empire before its final period), remained above the "nationalism" of the de-



veloping Western nations. But in Constantinople, because of the Latin occupation of 1204 with its enforced conversion of the Greek populace to Roman Catholicism and the bitterness this engendered, the religious faith of the Greeks and their sense of ethnicity now reached the point of becoming virtually congruent. Indeed, with the Greek recovery of Constantinople in 1261 and the reestablishment of the Byzantine state, and increasingly up to 1453, the two may be said to have coincided. This may be seen in the fact that, after 1261, the Greek population as a whole refused under any circumstances to accept papal aid—and this even in the face of the attempts of such powerful princes as King Charles of Sicily to recapture Constantinople and restore the Latin Empire.<sup>22</sup>

The papal price for aid was always religious union with the Roman church, which of course entailed recognition of Roman claims to jurisdiction over the Eastern church. But the vast bulk of the Greeks firmly believed, or at least intuitively sensed, that this would lead, not only to political domination, but ultimately even to the gradual Latinization of the Greek people. What other interpretation can be given to the taunt cast in 1274 by the Greek rabble at the envoys of Emperor Michael Palaeologus who were returning from the West after the signing of ecclesiastical union with Rome in order to secure papal aid against Charles of Anjou? The envoys were hooted at with the abusive words: "Frangos kathestekas!" ("You have become a Frank!"—that is, "Through union you have changed your religion and become Latinized"). As George Metochites, a pro-unionist Greek envoy to Rome complained: "Instead of a conflict of words, instead of refutative proof, instead of arguments from the Scriptures, what we [envoys] constantly hear is *Frangos kathestekas*. . . . Should we prounionists, simply because we favor union, be subjected to being called supporters of a foreign nation and not Byzantine patriots?"<sup>23</sup> (*alloethneis hemeis all' ou philoromaioi*).

So now at the very end we see the *complete* identification of Greek culture, or *ethnic identity* as we may call it, with Orthodoxy. Earlier, when Byzantium was politically ascendant, it could afford to translate the liturgy into the native languages of projected converts. Now that it had become almost impotent politically, indeed when it was completely on the defensive, it not only did not have the strength to reach outward to convert other peoples, but it had to remain extremely wary of any foreign and especially Latin advances—and this even when it seemed that without foreign aid the empire would sure-



ly fall. How else may we explain the popular intransigence in the face of Michael Palaeologus' blandishments or his brutal coercion to achieve religious union with Rome? The Byzantine people had come to believe more firmly than ever before that the purity of their Orthodox faith was their city's only protection and that the slightest deviation would bring divine punishment and the utter destruction of their empire. Such, in fact, was common Greek opinion after the Turkish capture of Constantinople in 1453—that the Greek acceptance of union, finally, at the Council of Florence in 1439, had brought down upon their heads the wrath of God for their pollution of the faith.<sup>24</sup>

In the protracted negotiations with Rome for religious union all the way from 1261 to 1453, the most famous example of this Greek insistence on preserving the faith intact was to be seen in the question of the filioque. In the Greek view, any addition to the creed as established by the seven ecumenical councils was sheer heresy, and they therefore branded the Latins heretics. Not even recourse to the old ecclesiastical theory of *economia* could satisfy the bulk of the populace and especially the archconservative monks who had great influence over the people. To the mass of the people, *economia* had no application where the safety of the city guarded by God—and evidently, too, where the cultural identity of the people—was concerned. As Michael himself put it, "*economia* had honorably been made use of by Greeks in the past. Only one thing now impels me to seek union [with Rome], the absolute necessity of averting the peril that threatens us."<sup>25</sup> But the deep-rooted suspicions of his people, the result largely of the Crusades and the years of Latin occupation, were too strong.

The most extreme statement reflecting such sentiment came from an educated Greek, the grand admiral of Byzantium, Lucas Notaras, only a few months before the capital's fall to the Turks. He is quoted as saying, "Better the turban of the Turk in Constantinople than the tiara of the Pope." A number of historians believe that he may actually have headed a party in the city who were so fearful of the loss of their national identity and culture through Latin religious union, that they preferred an Ottoman takeover to a Latin conquest. Many examples may be cited, several already utilized in the prologue, to demonstrate that this Greek fear of the West, a national trauma almost pathological in its intensity, was not groundless. On the Latin side, we may again cite the example of the cultivated



humanist Petrarch, celebrated for his love of *ancient* Greek culture, who was so aroused by the Byzantine refusal to accept Latin religious rites that he wrote of "the enemy Turks and the schismatic Greeks who are worse than enemies and hate and fear us with all their souls."<sup>26</sup>

In the same period—again to utilize a previous example—the anti-Greek Crusader-propagandist William of Adam, recognizing clearly the role of the Orthodox religion for the preservation of Greek ethnicity, proposed to "brainwash" the Greeks by forcing every Greek family to send its oldest son to the West to be brought up in the Catholic faith. And as late as the first decades of the fifteenth century, when Alfonso of Aragon proposed to launch a crusade in aid of Constantinople, his plans included, as documents only recently have revealed, the capture of the Greek capital, not for the benefit of the Greeks but to aggrandize his own ambitions.<sup>27</sup>

As for the Greeks, suffice it only to demonstrate the potency of the relationship of religion and ethnicity by quoting again the typical remark of the educated Joseph Bryennios of Crete, who in 1400 wrote: "Let no one be deceived by delusive hopes that the Italian allied troops will come to save us. If they pretend to rise to defend us, they will take arms only to destroy our city, *our race, and our name*."<sup>28</sup> Still later, at the Council of Florence, one Greek prelate, when urged by the Byzantine emperor to sign the union in order to bring aid to their beleaguered capital, said: "I will not accept the *filioque* and become Latinized."<sup>29</sup> All of these examples point to the inescapable conclusion that, more than ever before, the Greeks, now in a defensive position, fearing not only Turkish attack but subversion from the Latin West as well, had come to equate their Orthodoxy with what was unique to them alone, the ancient Greek cultural heritage. And it was the conjunction of these two factors, cultural "nationalism" and religious "nationalism," that produced the ideological origins of the later, modern Greek sense of national consciousness.<sup>30</sup>

And yet, it has to be noted that in spite of this commonly held antagonism and distrust of the Latins, a number of Greek intellectuals, including some of the highest-ranking Greek prelates—greater in number than is usually realized—were able, in a veritable tour de force, somehow to disengage in their minds this identification of religion and ethnic identity. That Demetrios Cydones, the Grand Logothete (prime minister), Maximos Planudes, and especially the great statesman and scholar of the Renaissance, Bessarion, were able



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to accept the idea of religious union with Rome while at the same time believing they could retain their cultural identity, was a remarkable achievement. True, some Greeks accused Bessarion of having sold out to the pope. And all of these men were termed by the Greek rabble, which could not understand their thinking, *Latino-phrones* (Latin-thinking or, as more commonly conceived of today, Latin-"lovers"), a term then particularly pejorative in its ring.

The good faith of many of these people cannot, I believe, be successfully impugned. But the answer that most of them were convinced of the superiority of the Latin faith is too simple. Actually, there is good evidence that some had, rather, begun to appreciate the advances which had been made by Latin culture, and that they saw, especially in the developing Italian Renaissance, a future role for their own Greek culture. *Cydones*, to take a leading example, when accused of following Thomas Aquinas to the detriment of Greek Patristic writings, is supposed in effect to have replied that Aquinas was based on Aristotle who is one of "our own Greeks."<sup>31</sup> In a few cases also, notably that of Bessarion, several of these persons may have been persuaded of the need for a return to the early Patristic unity of the church, what we would today call the "ecumenical" spirit. Moreover, for Bessarion and his teacher, the Neoplatonist Gemistos Pletho, it seemed that the advances made by the Latin West in technology and engineering might even have been utilized to revitalize the moribund Byzantine state, now in the last stage of its life.<sup>32</sup> That the complete merging of Orthodoxy and "national" identity was not valid—or at least less valid—for such scholars, renders them a remarkable exception, the first of a cultured group who, extending from the late fourteenth all the way to the nineteenth century, became an important part of the "diaspora," or scattered remnants of the Greek people in Western Europe. Of course, it cannot be denied that many Greeks emigrating to the West in this same period and especially after 1453 chose Catholicism simply for the sake of expediency, that is, in order to avoid persecution or for professional and political gain.

It is also worth noting that some Greek politicians of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, because of their aversion to the West and their equating religion and ethnic identity, looked for salvation from the Turkish danger, rather, to their fellow Orthodox Slavs of the Balkans, and especially of Russia.<sup>33</sup> Some little Russian help was, in fact, forthcoming in the form of alms. The emperors ap-



pealed several times to the Russian princes for assistance, but the latter were themselves at this time caught up in the storm that followed upon the Mongol conquest. Moreover, Kiev had long fallen and Moscow was too distant to be deeply concerned. Besides, in the Slavic areas, especially Moscow, the feeling had long prevailed that the Greeks, by their espousal of union with Rome at Florence, had betrayed Orthodoxy and, as the Russ believed, they themselves alone were now the true Orthodox.<sup>34</sup> (This belief, by the way, would seem, indirectly at least, to have contributed something to the growing ethnic feeling of the Russians.)

When the Turkish sultan Mohammed II entered Constantinople, one of his first official acts was to name George Scholarios, the rabid antiunionist, patriarch of Constantinople, and to grant him the full privileges of his predecessors not only over his Greek countrymen but over all other subject Orthodox peoples as well. Indeed, partly owing to the sultan's acts, the coincidence of religion and nationalism in its political and cultural aspects now reached its climax, becoming more complete than ever before. For George Scholarios (now called Gennadios), placed by the sultan at the head of the millet or *nation* of the Greeks, became, as such, not only the political but the religious head of *all* Balkan Christians as well, and was subject only to the high suzerainty of the sultan himself.

In the succeeding centuries, especially in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth, the occupied Greek areas in the Balkans sank to their cultural nadir. But, as is widely recognized, it was above all the Orthodox church that preserved the national identity of these Greeks. (This is not to overlook the splendid work of preservation of the spirit of a free Greek nation by the scholars of the diaspora in Western Europe—see below, chap. 9).<sup>35</sup> With few exceptions, the Greeks of the mainland had in general become almost illiterate, and it was in part fear of this very eventuality that moved Bessarion, as early as 1468, to bequeath his remarkable collection of some six hundred Greek manuscripts to Venice, that haven for Greek émigrés, not so much, as he prophetically implied in an earlier letter, to disseminate Greek learning to Western scholars, but so that his own countrymen could recall the actions of their ancestors and not degenerate into becoming no better than barbarians or slaves.<sup>36</sup> This generally overlooked statement is doubly meaningful because it comes from the pen of the very man termed derisively by many of his own Greek compatriots a *Latinophron*, a traitor to the Byzan-



tine people—but one who actually realized, probably better than many others, the significance of the Greek cultural heritage. On the other hand, to be sure, the statement also does tend by implication to diminish the close identification between church and national identity. However, Bessarion, a churchman himself, as noted, was an ecumenical-minded Patristic scholar who looked back nostalgically to the early centuries of the church when East and West had been one.

In contrast, the Greeks of the patriarchal court in Turkish Constantinople and those who served as administrative aides and envoys of the Turks to Vienna, Moscow, and elsewhere—Greeks like the Grand Dragoman (interpreter) Panagiotes Nicousios<sup>37</sup>—were more conscious of their *Orthodox* inheritance as such. What they stressed was primarily their *Byzantine* heritage; and their aim, if not always explicit, was through the agency of the patriarchate to achieve a restoration of the old Byzantine Empire. Some, after 1453, placed their hopes in the Russian tsar, the sole surviving independent Orthodox ruler. Maxim the Greek, an Athonite monk who worked in Muscovy in the early sixteenth century, is often cited as having been one of such a group. But whatever may have been his political aims, his immediate religious objective was the resubmission of the Russian church to the ecclesiastical authority of the Greek patriarchate of Constantinople.<sup>38</sup> What finally brought on the Greek Revolution, besides the actual events of 1821, was the rise of a Greek middle class; the decline of Turkish power; the permeation of Enlightenment ideals of liberty, equality, and fraternity; and also, it should be stressed, the conjunction of ancient Greek ideals with Byzantine religious ideology.<sup>39</sup>

It is interesting that in the last two centuries of Byzantium's life, when the nation was threatened from without as never before, it witnessed an astonishing "renaissance" of culture, the so-called Palaeologan Renaissance. This would accord with a notable theory of modern sociology that a nation when it is most threatened is sometimes able to gather its energies and produce a revival or "revitalization" of its culture.<sup>40</sup> This happened to Byzantium in the late thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth centuries not only in the literary and artistic spheres but also in the religious area, in the form of a new but more intensive kind of personal piety: the mystical beliefs of Hesychasm. This, some scholars claim (and in some cases rightly, though there are definite exceptions), may in some men



have reflected a deepening sense of "nationality," a feeling that one was expressing traditional Byzantine beliefs and practices as opposed to Latin. Moreover, it was in this later period, when to the Greeks Orthodoxy and Greek culture became coterminous, that some of them once again began to revert to calling themselves, instead of the Byzantine name *Romans*, "Hellenes," a name which had hitherto been reserved for the pagan Greeks. This indicated that they were at last beginning to see a continuity between their ancient forebears and themselves. It did not mean, however, that any of them, except perhaps the famous Gemistos Pletho, wished to invalidate or apostatize from their Orthodox faith—that is, to separate their religion from their recently found "ethnicity."<sup>41</sup>

What may we conclude from this survey of the relationship between religion and ethnicity, conformity and pluralism, in the history of the Byzantine Empire and beyond? During this long period, with its shifting and later contracting political boundaries of empire, the element which seemed most steadfast in the vicissitudes of the Greek people was the Orthodox religion. True, existing even before that chronologically was the ancient Greek culture, which beyond question has always constituted the quintessence, the nucleus, of Hellenism. But in times of peace as well as in those of danger and crisis, it was the church, which early had assimilated Greek culture unto itself, that primarily served to preserve this continuity. And even in the final period of the Palaeologi, from 1261 to 1453, when a new emphasis on "nationalism" very strongly emerged, it expressed itself in a Hellenic culture for the most part still anchored in the church.

In our first and second stages, during the times when the state apparatus was powerful, it did not seem to matter that the ethnic composition of the empire was a very heterogeneous one, because the church and its ideology were successfully identified, or intertwined, with the power and ideology of the empire, itself a genuine reality. Here the state, in the person of the emperor, served as the protector of the church and the guardian of Orthodoxy, although, as we have seen, at certain points—during the Iconoclastic conflict for example—the church had to assert itself over the claims of the emperor in the matter of establishing dogma. This clearly shows, incidentally, that in strictly spiritual matters the church was stronger than the emperor.

At the same time, in our second period, when the Semitic prov-